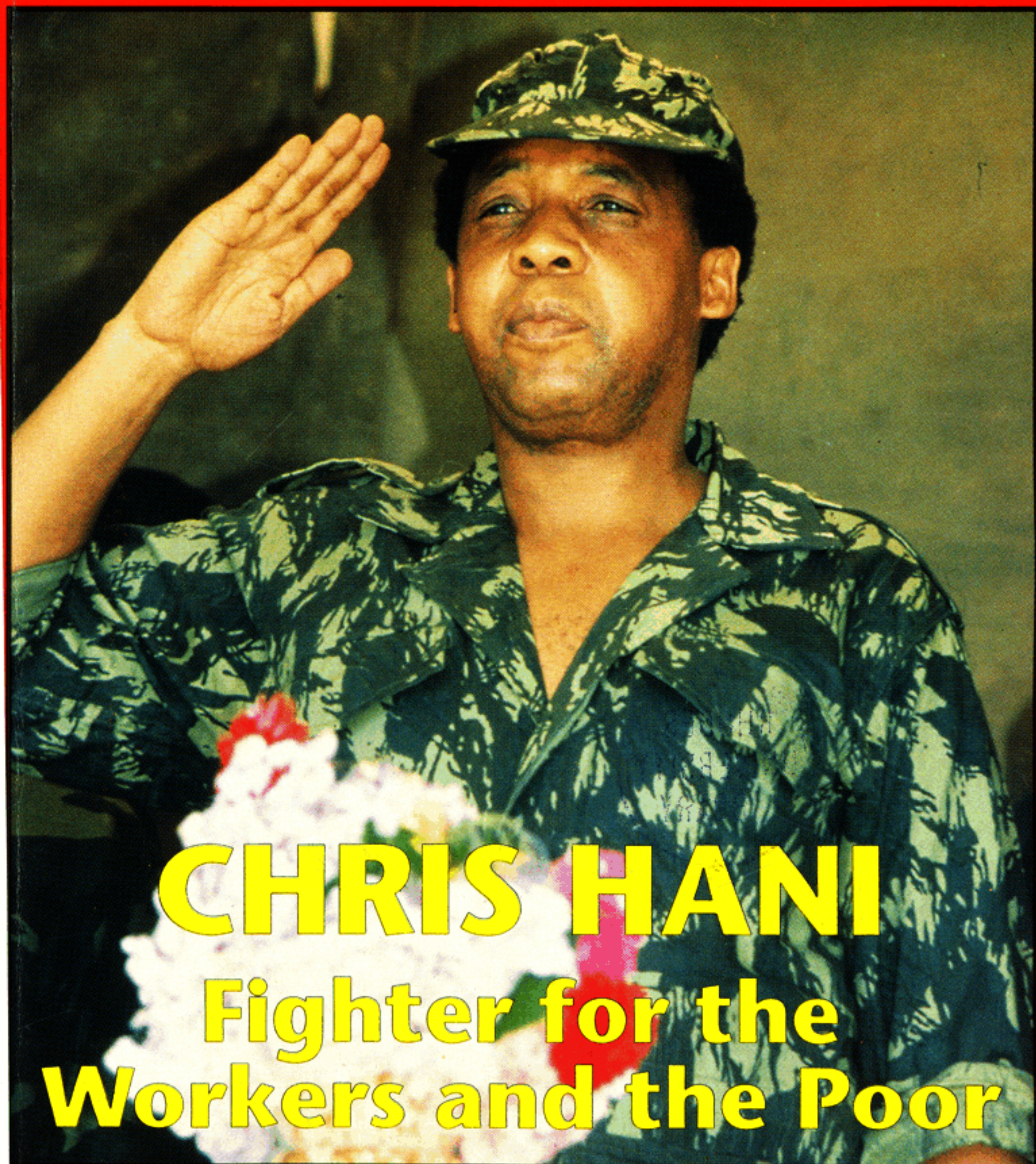


# The African Communist

JOURNAL OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN COMMUNIST PARTY



## CHRIS HANI

### Fighter for the Workers and the Poor



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# **The African Communist**

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# Contents

## **EDITORIAL NOTES**

**1**

Chris Hani – fighter for the workers & the poor  
Disinformation Campaign: Just the rightwing? ...Who killed Hani?  
Hambla kahle father and leader: SACP tribute to O.R. Tambo

## **STRATEGY CONFERENCE**

**14**

The role of the SACP in the transition from democracy to socialism  
• PART ONE: The Party  
• PART TWO: A Reconstruction Pact

## **ECONOMIC POLICY**

**29**

Towards a socialist economy: observations from abroad

## **THE GREAT DEBATE: FEDERALISM & REGIONALISM**

**39**

Federalism versus unitarism: which way forward?  
*by Thozamile Botha*  
The tenth region: How viable is it?  
*by Govan Mbeki*

## **INTERNATIONAL**

**51**

Government, civil society and democracy – the Cuban  
experience *by Carlos Zabala*  
Simukai means "Arise": Soviet drama and a Zimbabwean  
co-operative *by Robert Kavanagh*

## **BOOK REVIEW**

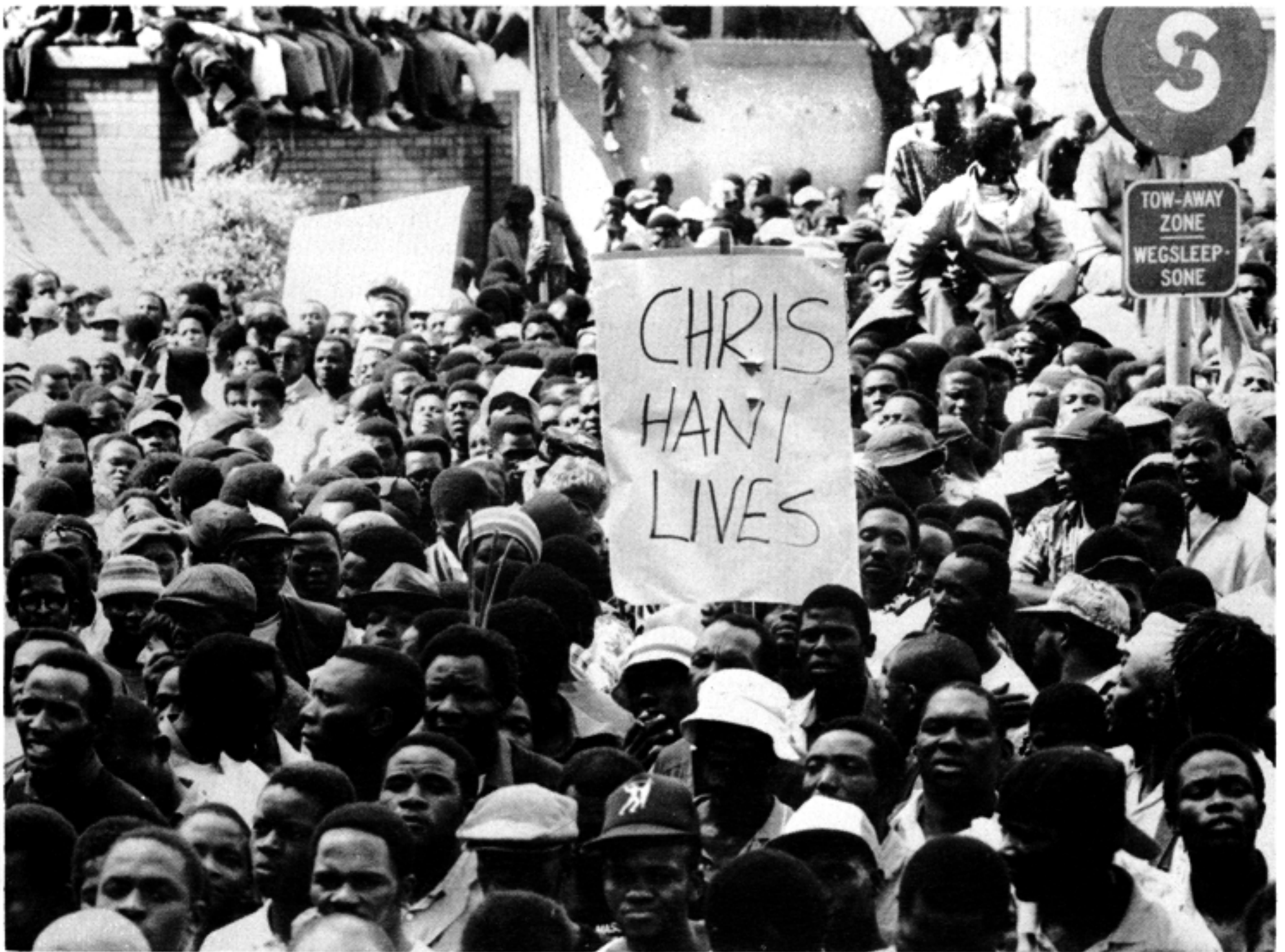
**62**

Erich Honecker cross-examined  
*reviewed by Brian Bunting*

## **PRESS WATCH**

**67**

Sunday Times caught with its pants down



**The shots that killed comrade Chris, unwittingly mobilised a huge army of liberation across the face of our country.**

# **Chris Hani – fighter for the workers and the poor**



The assassination of our general secretary, comrade Chris Hani, shortly after 10am on April 10, dealt a terrible blow to our party, to our movement, and to our country. Comrade Chris, as an individual, is irreplaceable. He had emerged in the past months, according even to the opinion polls of our opponents, as easily the second most popular politician in our country (after comrade Nelson Mandela, of course).

But the shots that killed comrade Chris, unwittingly mobilised a huge army of liberation across the face of our country. On Wednesday 14th and again on Monday 19th April, the day of the funeral, 4 million workers stayed away. These were the two largest stayaways in the history of our struggle. In addition to employed workers, millions of students and unemployed also observed the two days.

These were not just passive stayaways. An estimated 2,5 million people took part in thousands of pickets, rallies, marches and services throughout South Africa on Wednesday 14th April. The funeral itself, was the largest funeral in our country's history.

It was not just our immediate SACP and ANC-led alliance constituency that was mobilised. Tens of thousands of South Africans (and people all over the world) expressed their outrage at the killing. Church people, the Chief Rabbi, Islamic and Hindu religious figures stood up publicly to condemn the assassination, and even, on many occasions, to express their solidarity with Chris Hani's ideals. Even the apartheid embassy in Washington flew its flag at half-mast. On death-row in Pretoria Central, prisoners pooled their meagre

allowances to raise R750 to be sent to the Hani family – comrade Chris was an outspoken opponent of capital punishment.

Let no-one forget that this country-wide and international outpouring of outrage and sorrow was for a fallen Communist Party leader in the year 1993.

Just three and four years ago, our opponents were confidently proclaiming the "final demise of communism". In life, as in death, Chris Hani has proved them absolutely wrong.

But comrade Chris would also have been the first to insist that it was not just any communism that deserved to live. For him, communism was not the affair of a theoretical elite. It was a cause to be fought for in the heart of a broad mass movement. Communism, for him, meant, above all, simple but noble things like:

- jobs for the jobless;
- homes for the homeless;
- a living wage for the workers;
- land for the landless;
- hope for the youth;
- a life of dignity for the old;
- free health care and relevant and free education for us all.

Communism meant an end to the exploitation of the many by the few.

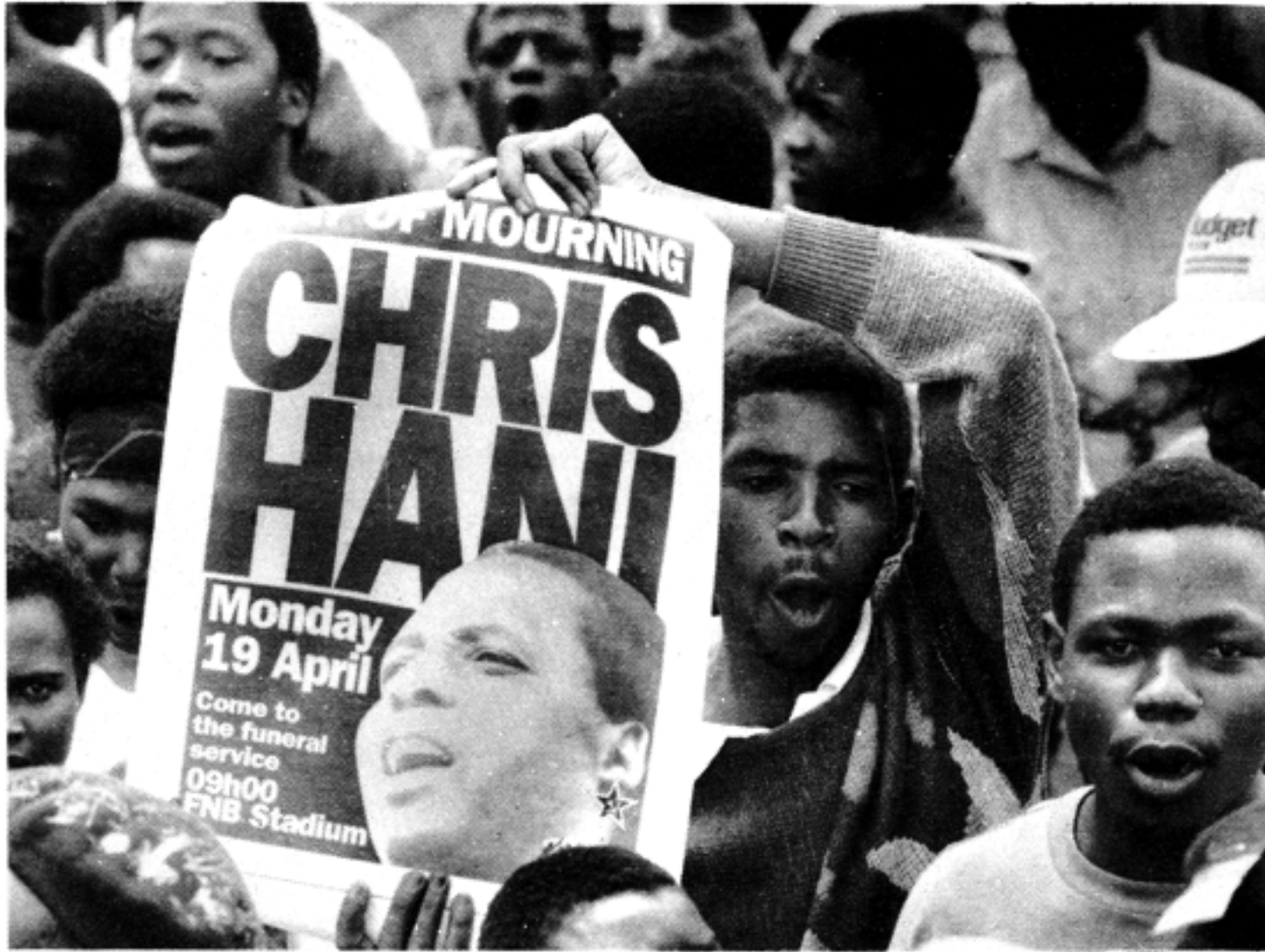
As an individual, Chris Hani is irreplaceable.

Our answer to the assassination has been, and must continue to be, collective, mass-based and grass-rooted.

**LONG LIVE THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIS HANI – FIGHTER FOR THE WORKERS AND THE POOR!**

**BUILD THE PARTY OF CHRIS HANI!**





**Mourners at the funeral of cde Chris... the funeral turned out to be the biggest the country has ever experienced**



**Hamba kahle qabane... carrying the coffin of a fallen hero: (left) Joe Modise, MK Commander, (right) Siphiwe Nyanda, Chief-of-staff, followed by senior officers of MK**



# Just the ultra-right? ...Who killed Hani?

**"The ANC would be well advised to sever its links with the Communist Party, and especially one Mr Hani..."**

De Klerk's Minister of Justice, Kobie Coetsee, October 9, 1992.

**I**n July 1992 an assassination attempt was made on Chris Hani in broad daylight in central Johannesburg. A young black male, tailed Hani along Marshall Street, just around the corner from the SACP head office. The nervous-looking young man stepped into a women's hair salon and, ignoring the shop assistants' queries as to what he was doing, fiddled with an object concealed in a windbreaker. The shop assistants were convinced he was cocking a gun.

The young man then stepped out on to the pavement, followed by the assistants, who recognised Hani half a block away. They rushed over to warn him. When the would-be assassin realised he had been spotted, he fled across the busy road, nearly getting knocked over in his panic. He hurried over to a Toyota Cressida that had been hovering on the far side of the road, and spoke to two

white males in the front. He then sprang into the back-seat, and the car moved off at high speed. The number-plate of the Cressida was noted. It turned out to be false, the number for a trailer.

There were several other sinister features to this attempted assassination, not least the complete unwillingness of the South African Police to investigate. At first they argued that no charges had been laid and therefore they could not investigate, although the SACP had held a well-covered press conference within an hour of the event. When formal charges were laid through our lawyers, the SAP said that the number-plate of the car was false and so any follow-up was impossible (see *New Nation*, 14.8.92). No attempt was made to question witnesses or even Hani himself.

But there was another sinister circumstance surrounding the July 1992 assassination attempt.



**Character assassination chapter one: MK renegades**

It is possible that the identity of the would-be assassin – a young, black male – was not entirely fortuitous. In the weeks before this event, a major anti-ANC campaign had been launched, using former detainees held by the ANC in Angola. In the forefront of this campaign was Patrick Dlongwana (also known as Hlongwane and Harvey Maringa) of the so-called Returned Exiles Committee. (Dlongwana, incidentally, was arrested in Lusaka in January 1987, after trying to infiltrate the ANC. He was a notorious security policeman, and confessed to a lengthy and brutal career as an agent).

Not long before the July 1992 assassination attempt, Dlongwana had actually appeared on SATV and threatened that his Committee would assassinate ANC and MK leadership figures. Dlongwana, of course, was never charged for making these statements, nor was the SATV ever reprimanded for allowing Dlongwana, in this pre-recorded interview, air-time to make such threats.

What if the July 1992 assassination attempt had been successful? Would the SAP have failed to produce a killer (as in the case of David Webster's assassination, and numerous others)? Or, would they have conducted a seemingly professional investigation, finding that it was "just a former ANC member with a personal grudge"?

The ground had certainly been prepared for such a finding in the weeks before the attempt.

**Character assassination number two: APLA and anti-white terrorism**

In the second half of last year, military and national intelligence services pro-

duced an 18-page disinformation document entitled "New political development – formation of South African People's Party (SAPP)". The document claimed that Hani, together with Winnie Mandela, was preparing a breakaway party and that he had established a secret army (the "Black People's Army") in Zimbabwe, drawing on disenchanted elements of the SACP, APLA and MK. The moving spirit behind the disinformation document, according to *The Weekly Mail* ("Army of the night: Dreamed up?", 26.3.93), was Hernus Kriel, De Klerk's Minister of Law and Order.

Kriel's document came back to haunt him in parliament some nine days after Hani's assassination. In the face of national and international outrage, the De Klerk government was keeping a very low profile, hoping everyone would forget their own intense character assassination campaign in the preceding months and weeks. But not everyone had forgotten. Not everyone thought it was disinformation – Schalk Pienaar, for instance.

In the State President's vote in parliament, on April 19, the CP's Schalk Pienaar (MP for Potgietersrus) wanted to know why the government was suddenly being so silent about Chris Hani's renegade army in Zimbabwe. Pienaar, obviously referring to a confidential security briefing he had received, presumably from De Klerk's securocrats, wanted to know why the government was not telling the public about Hani's South African People's Party "formed in a neighbouring territory...Why did the government not tell South Africa what Chris Hani was busy with in the last few months?" (*The Citizen*, 20.4.93).



In the months before the assassination, various versions of this story were floated. *Rapport*, often in the foreground of these campaigns, carried a story on October 12 last year that the SACP, and in particular Chris Hani, were planning to take over MK, and a future South African army.

The London *Sunday Times* correspondent Richard Ellis (another major actor in the anti-Hani disinformation campaign) claimed that Hani (and Winnie Mandela) were planning a breakaway from the ANC (31.1.93).

Then, on the Sunday before Hani's assassination, *Rapport* again tried to blow life into this disinformation campaign. It claimed that Hani (and senior MK leaders) had held unmandated meetings with APLA members ("aimed at securing mutual co-operation so as to derail the negotiations process") (*Rapport*, 4.4.93). Some of the meetings were alleged to have happened in the Transkei.

SAP spokesperson, Captain Craig Kotze (another cog in the Hani character assassination machine) added the next day that "the government could confirm such meetings had taken place and also had information that dissident MK members had joined APLA" (*The Citizen*, 5.4.93).

This disinformation continued to be spread in the days before Hani's assassination, despite his outright denials and despite his outspoken criticism of PAC and APLA (for their failure to unambivalently condemn anti-white terrorism).

Against the background of the murder of whites in the Border region and at Eikenhof, and against a regime-inspired hate campaign against the Transkei and APLA, everything was being done to

link Hani, in some way, to anti-white terrorism.

When a white right-wing extremist was arrested shortly after Hani's slaying, a motive had already been well established by months of systematic disinformation. It was a disinformation campaign that had reached a peak, wittingly or unwittingly, in the very week before the killing.

If Waluz and the Derby-Lewises are clearly part of an extreme right wing, those who had waged the campaign of character assassination against Hani were something else again. Besides the "third force" in its various guises, there is a powerful first force with its headquarters in De Klerk's security establishment.

### **Character assassination chapter three: bank robbery**

In November last year the Goldstone Commission raided the secret headquarters of the SADF's Military Intelligence (MI) Department of Covert Collection. "With the assistance of reinforcements provided by the South African Police, the building housing the Military Intelligence unit was sealed and five files were seized", the Goldstone Commission announced a few days later.

What these five files (five presumably from among thousands whose contents remain unknown) showed was that the notorious ex-CCB agent, Ferdi Barnard, had been employed by MI until December 1991, despite official denials to the contrary. Barnard, a convicted double murderer, was employed by MI to discredit MK. The manner of discrediting, according to the Goldstone Commission, was to be by "linking it to criminal acts and crime syndicates by using a



**SUNDAY TIMES • 18 APRIL 1993**

**Winnie Mandela with assassin**  
by Richard Ellis  
Johannesburg

**Winnie denies she'll start new party**

**Winnedorstige tiran, nóg halfgort**

**No truth in breakaway army, says Hani**

**WORLD NEWS**

**Mandela links ANC in assassination of Hani**

**Attempt on Hani denied**

**REVENGE MISSION** *Chief Patrick Hlongwane says there are attempts to kill members of the Returned Exile Committee, who have moved to wipe out ANC leaders:*

**Hani was not**  
New military unit was formed by Hani: CP

**Loot went to ANC, court told**

**Hani denies he'll break with ANC after poll**

**Beweerde komplot om Winnie na sielsieke-inrigting te stuur**

**LA meeting: ANC in denial of govt claim**

**Angela Quintal**  
A MAN charged with being a member of an AK-47-wielding gang which netted about him in armed robberies told a magistrate a large percentage of the loot had been taken to the ANC's Johannesburg headquarters to fund returning exiles.

**Angela Quintal**  
The African Communist Party secretary-general, Mr Chris Hani, yesterday denied reports by the London Sunday Times that he had agreed to break with the African National Congress after a general election.

**Angela Quintal**  
Hani said he had been misunderstood by the reporter.  
"I'm not preparing to break with the ANC," he said.

**The press played a pivotal role in the disinformation campaign shortly before the assassination of Chris Hani**

network of prostitutes, homosexuals and drug dealers." (*The Citizen*, 17.11.92).

This kind of dirty tricks campaign has continued, with or without Ferdi Barnard.

For instance, on Friday March 26th, fourteen days before Hani's assassination, Solomon Mqanqeni and two others appeared in the Rand Supreme Court, charged with murder and bank robbery. The three were alleged to be members of an ANC inspired self defence unit, with MK connections. In a written statement, which Mqanqeni claimed had been extracted from him under duress, he alleged that the murder weapons were distributed to the group by Chris Hani and a "Tokyo" (an obvious reference to ANC PWV chairperson, Tokyo Sexwale). The statement further alleged that a portion of the loot from the bank robbery had been given to "Tokyo" in Shell House (the ANC headquarters).

On the very evening of this statement being presented in court, and admitted as evidence, Mqanqeni and his accomplices mysteriously escaped from Diepkloof Prison. According to prison authorities, they drove out of the prison in the prison truck which had just brought them back from court. They apparently (and incredibly) drove out through a wide open front gate.

Two days later, after the convenient court appearance and the alleged escape, Minister of Law and Order, Hernus Kriel went on the rampage against MK in parliament. He accused MK of being "nothing but criminals". And referring to the negotiations demand for multi-party joint control over all armed formations, Kriel said: "We are not interested in joint control over criminals...we have declared war against war-mongers and

criminals." (*The Citizen*, 30.3.93)

The Mqanqeni affair, with its sequel in parliament three days later, had all the hall-marks of a stage-managed operation. The investigating officers into the bank robbery and murders committed in the course of the robbery never once questioned, let alone contacted, either Hani or Sexwale. Yet the police and prosecutor were implicating them in extremely serious crimes. "These public servants seem to be more intent on making political propaganda than on investigating crimes", the SACP central committee said in a press statement at the time.

The circumstances of the fortuitous escape are also puzzling. Whatever the explanations for it, the escape prevented the SACP and the ANC cross-checking whether Mqanqeni and his co-accused were really ANC self defence unit members as alleged. At the time, Chris Hani, in a gesture typical of his generosity, expressed concern for the safety of Mqanqeni and his co-accused. "Having served a useful purpose, I am worried that they might now be eliminated. In the past, fabricated escapes have been used to eliminate individuals."

On the eve of his assassination, then, a systematic and intensified campaign of disinformation had been directed against Hani. Needless to say, virtually all of these stories were launched in the press without the basic journalistic courtesy of first getting comment from Hani, the SACP or the ANC. The journalists responsible showed as much journalistic inquisitiveness as the SAP in the Mqanqeni affair. It was the construction of disinformation not the pursuit of information that they were after.

It is true that there were frequent



denials from our side. We also called for Goldstone to investigate the Mqanqeni affair. But part of the disinformation war (or PSYOPS for psychological operations as it is known to its practitioners) is to create first and frequent impressions. The allegations need have no substance, and they may even be mutually contradictory (Hani was at once meant to be trying to take over MK and launch a separate renegade army, for instance). The point is to build an individual into a bogey, to surround him or her with continual controversy.

### **After the assassination, the disinformation continues**

The pattern of disinformation against Chris Hani did not end with his death. In the hours after the killing, and soon after the arrest of Waluz, Captain Craig Kotze and Deputy Minister of Law and Order, Gert Myburgh announced that this had been "the act of a lone gunman without political motive". It is difficult to know whether this explanation was the result of sheer stupidity, "parental" instincts in defence of a killer of a communist, or whether it was an attempt at a cover-up. At any rate, Waluz's obvious connections to the ultra-right quickly discredited this line of argument. Since then, the SAP and government spokespersons have been anxious to portray the assassination as a right-wing conspiracy, implicating leading members of the Conservative Party.

They have also been anxious to present the case as one that has been quickly and surgically solved. No-one has been more anxious to present a neatly wrapped-up case than the official SAP spokesperson for the Hani investigation – Brigadier Frans Malherbe.

### **Brig Frans Malherbe**

Brigadier Frans Malherbe has played a similar role in at least one previous political assassination case.

David Webster, the Wits anthropologist, was murdered in Johannesburg on May 1, 1989. On the 25th of that month a man calling himself Van Niekerk arrived at Webster's research post at Kosi Bay, near to a possible joint SADF/Renamo infiltration route into Mozambique. The man claimed to be a fellow researcher who had worked in the past with Webster. He tried to enter the post but was denied access by Webster's colleagues, who immediately suspected something sinister. The man then left by boat with three others.

The incident was reported to the SAP team investigating Webster's murder. Later Frans Malherbe (then a colonel) announced that the police had investigated the matter, and that Van Niekerk's story was true. He was a student based at the University of Potchefstroom, claimed Malherbe. Both Potchefstroom and Wits Universities, however, checked their records, and denied that he had ever been registered (*Weekly Mail*, 27.7.90).

Is Brigadier Frans Malherbe routinely employed in politically sensitive assassination investigations? And what is his function as "spokesperson" in these cases?

### **Richard Ellis**

Richard Ellis, the Johannesburg based correspondent for the London *Sunday Times*, has been one of the most active journalists in the disinformation campaign against Chris Hani. On January 31, 1993 he published a particularly offensive article on Hani, entitled "South Africa's Saddam stakes his claim".

But Ellis, like others, did not confine himself to disinformation before the assassination. One week after the assassination, he made the most sinister of interventions ("Winnie Mandela links ANC with assassination of Hani", London *Sunday Times*, 18.4.93). The headline tells the story, Ellis claims that Winnie Mandela has alleged that Hani was murdered by political rivals within the ANC.

When questioned, Ellis admitted he had not spoken to Mrs Mandela. When asked by the ANC's Department of Information and Publicity why he had failed to seek comment from them, he claimed to have tried repeatedly, and that he had left messages with the telephone answering service, AutoPage. As it happens, AutoPage records all messages. Ellis had left no such message.

Worse still, in the days following the London publication of this terrible lie, Ellis approached Democratic Party MP, Lester Fuchs, to raise the allegation in parliament. A last minute intervention by DP leader Zach De Beer stopped Fuchs. The CP MP, Schalk Pienaar did, however, try to give the story some local mileage by raising it in parliament.

A simple survey of disinformation on Chris Hani over the last nine months gives the impression of a systematic and multi-faceted campaign. It seems to be a campaign with extensive resources and media networks. Is this impression justified?

### **"Komops Vyand"**

In 1991 Major Nico Basson began talking to the press. Basson was the former head of the SADF Department of Military Intelligence Comops (i.e. disinformation) operation in the run-up

to the Namibian independence elections in 1989. His revelations lifted the veil on one aspect of the apartheid regime's intelligence networks.

According to Basson: "Discrediting political leaders in the opposition camp is a popular strategy, especially in the army. In Namibia one of the main themes of the anti-Swapo strategy was the discrediting of the senior leadership of the party. In South Africa this strategy has also been used with great success." (*Vrye Weekblad*, 12.4.91).

According to Basson more than a million rand was spent in Namibia on just one disinformation front company – PRO Communication Projects. The Namibian anti-Swapo election campaign, codenamed Operation Agree, was, according to Basson, a "dress rehearsal" for elections in South Africa. "All the networks are in place" (*The Star*, 11.6.91).

Basson said that a sub-department of the army's propaganda department, "Komops Vyand", had been working with great success over many years "in the planting and dissemination of false information" on, for instance, Winnie Mandela. Basson named a Colonel Tobie Vermaak of MI as the head of this project.

Although De Klerk retired some MI and other intelligence figures in the wake of the Goldstone revelations on Ferdi Barnard, all the structures remain essentially in place. The notorious General Joffel van der Westhuizen (associated with the Goniwe "death" signal) remains head of MI. What are all these structures up to?

The German based *Top Secret Magazine* has its own theory. It claims that the assassination of Hani "was not a right-wing conspiracy organised by a



'third force' that is 'acting out of control'" (22.4.93). Citing unnamed sources within Pretoria's intelligence services, the magazine asserts that the assassination was part of a broader strategy, codenamed Operation Thunderstorm. It says that Operation Thunderstorm was hatched in the summer of 1990, and that it is co-ordinated by an ultra-secret team consisting of the top leadership of NIS and MI. MI, it says, co-ordinates the "dirty tricks" side of the operation. According to the publication, Hani's assassination was "executed by the security forces of the white minority regime; some of the extremist right-wing forces are just used in the scenario designed by Operation Thunderstorm."

At this point in time, we have no way of knowing whether or proving that these claims are true. De Klerk, certainly, has failed to dismantle his intelligence and dirty tricks departments. Insofar as he has retired some of his operatives, he has

done so secretively and without taking the South African public into his confidence. The parliament has recently voted R3,7 billion of taxpayer's money to the SADF's secret account. Again, we have no way of knowing where all this money is going.

What we can see, because it is a matter of public record, is a consistent campaign of disinformation, which, as we have tried to show, included a major character assassination of Chris Hani in the months and days before his physical assassination. Whether the character assassination and the physical assassination were connected in a conspiracy, or whether they simply coincided in time is a matter of speculation.

Either way, those involved in the disinformation, dirty tricks campaign against Hani must not be allowed to escape their share of culpability for the terrible crime that has been committed.★

### ***In their own words...***

"Discrediting political leaders in the opposition camp is a popular strategy, especially in the army. In Namibia one of the main themes of the anti-Swapo strategy was the discrediting of the senior leadership of the party. In South Africa this strategy has also been used with great success."

**NICO BASON** (*Vrye Weekblad*, 12.4.91).

# Hamba kahle, father and leader

**CHARLES NQAKULA, SACP GENERAL SECRETARY PAYS TRIBUTE TO cde OR TAMBO**

**T**he SACP sadly dips its banner in honour of one of the greatest leaders our struggle, and our country have ever nurtured. Comrade Tambo's contribution was national, continental and global. He was a patriot, he was an internationalist.

As a young man in the late 1940s and through the 1950s, he helped to transform the African National Congress into the mass based formation it is today. Through the difficult years of exile, it was comrade Tambo who (more than any other) turned exile from a retreat into a challenge; from a challenge into a world-wide movement of solidarity.

From his exile, comrade Tambo turned the tables on those who enforced his exile. The apartheid rulers exiled him, and for their pains they found themselves becoming the real exiles, more and more banished from the world community of nations.

Our own national struggle benefitted enormously from the huge international solidarity movement that comrade OR helped to build. But, in mobilising millions of people around the world, comrade OR also helped us, South Africans, to make our proudest contribution to world civilisation, in the struggle of rea-

son against racism, of decency against chauvinism, of liberation against colonialism and its terrible legacy.

Today, having failed to smash and liquidate our ANC-led liberation movement, our more sophisticated opponents are trying to reconstruct an ANC in their own image. And in doing this they try, above all, to drive wedges in all directions.

They try to present different aspects of our movement as necessarily in contradiction with each other.

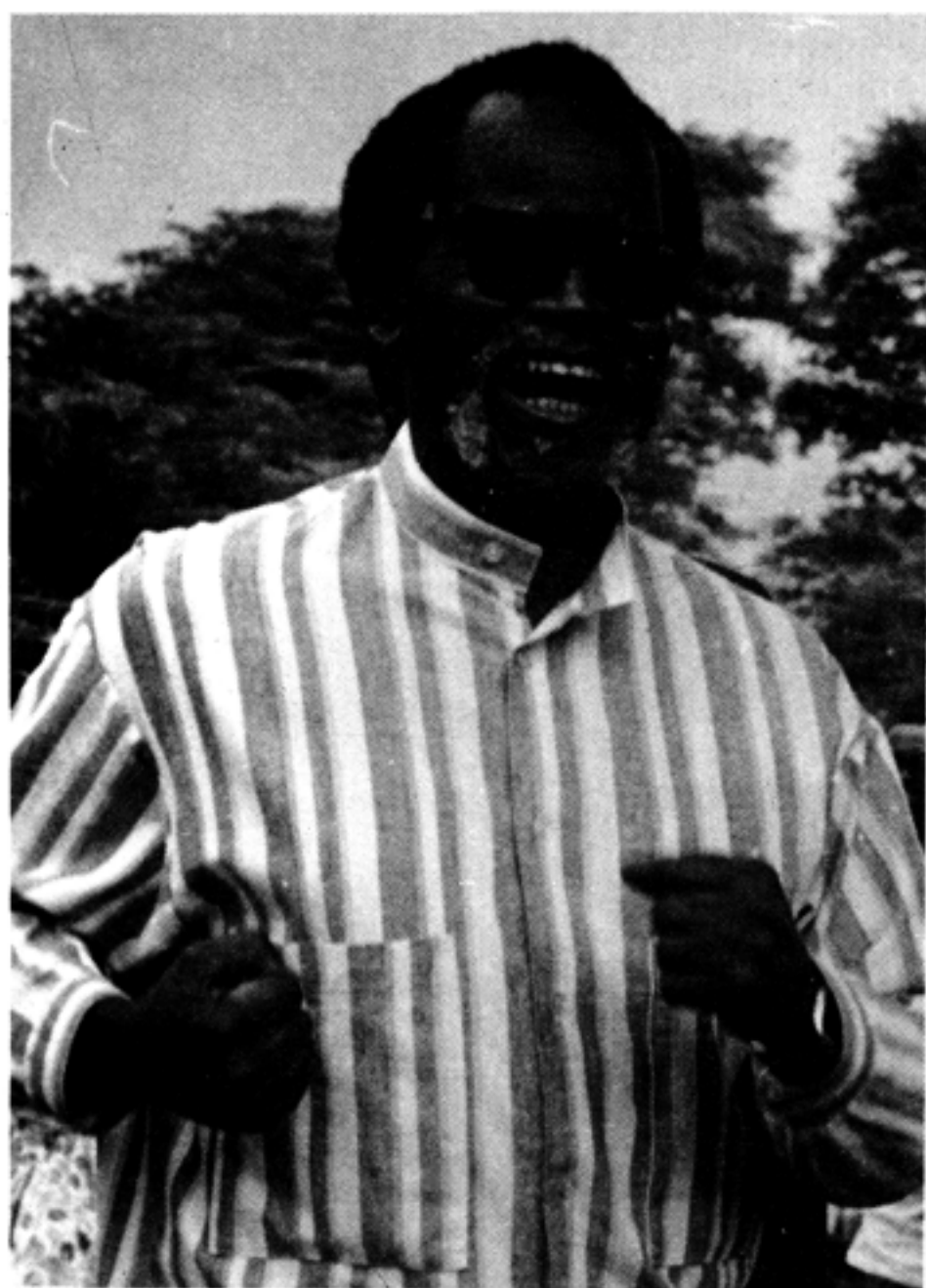
They try to pit youth against older people, diplomacy against mass struggle, or negotiations against militancy.

The abiding example of comrade OR teaches us another lesson altogether. This great international diplomat never forgot his soldiers in the camps. This elder statesman cut his political teeth as a militant youth leaguer. This quiet, reserved man was the most determined of revolutionaries. This architect of the Harare Declaration was also, and at the very moment of the signing of the Harare Declaration, the head of Operation Vula.

Did all of these facets make our leader a man of contradictions?

Nothing could be further from the truth. Never was a person so absolutely





**Cde OR... quiet, reserved,  
the most determined of  
revolutionaries**

serene, integrated, composed.

He was, and is, loved by everyone in our movement, young and old, soldier and administrator, underground veteran and diplomat.

As Communists we remember, in particular, comrade Tambo's enduring contribution to building and deepening the unity between our Party and the ANC. He was the greatest champion of unity of all democratic forces.

He also taught us Communists a sense of humility. For here was a non-Communist who taught us real lessons in internationalism, in practical dialectics, in revolutionary discipline. Here was a devout Christian who taught us the practical meaning of a scientific approach to poli-

tics.

For those of us privileged to work at times under comrade OR's direction, we remember him as a great and patient listener. As a leader who would, only after very careful consideration, provide a clear judgement.

Even in death now, one cannot help feeling that he is carefully listening and considering. I have the unnerving sense that when I have finished this tribute, he will deliver a verdict.

I like to believe that the verdict will be much the same as the message he sent to our Party's 7th Congress in Cuba in 1989. At the time, Comrade OR, more than anyone, understood that a new phase was about to open up within our country, that negotiations were impending. This is what he told us then:

- **"As never before, we need to move, arm in arm, shoulder to shoulder, with all our allies, friends and supporters. Within our movement we need to close ranks now as never before..."**
- **"...let us consolidate and strengthen our alliance and advance in concert. Let us remain vigilant and watch out for those forces who never leave the boardrooms where they studiously plot our own undoing. Our victories are many and significant, but now, more than ever before, we need to defeat them in order to secure our offensive and ensure our advance to the victory of our revolution."**

That is what he told us in 1989. I believe that his whole life is still telling us that today.

*Hamba kahle, father and leader,  
our beloved comrade OR Tambo.*

# The role of the SACP in the transition to democracy and socialism

## PART ONE: THE PARTY

**S**ECTION Five of our party Manifesto (*Building workers' power for democratic change*) remains a valid, general guideline to the kind of SACP that we should be building.

The general theses in Section Five need, however, to be supplemented with:

- ★ a fuller assessment of our experience over the last two and half years of legal, party building;
- ★ further consideration of the path to socialism and the kind of socialism we are hoping to build in our country (and the implications these have for party building); and
- ★ consideration of changes within the working class in South Africa (and the implications these have for a party of the working class).



### A. THE SACP SINCE JULY 1990

There are a number of very significant positive achievements that we have accomplished in the past two and a half years:

- ★ With a membership of over 40,000 our party is now considerably larger than at any time in its history. We have fully launched 9 regions (with a further 3 launched districts on the way to forming regions). We have built up a communist presence in most of the major industrial complexes.
- ★ The recently released Markinor opinion poll (conducted in November 1992) showed that our party is performing extremely well in terms of popularity amongst the majority African population.



★ In the course of 1992 our party's catalysing role in the mass action campaign (particularly between June and August) was obvious, and led to a concerted anti-communist offensive by the regime and liberal media – a sure sign of our impact.

These achievements are particularly notable, considering that they have occurred against the backdrop of the most serious international crisis for socialism and the communist movement.

These achievements have much to do with the general character of our party's membership. Generally speaking we have a devoted, serious, and disciplined membership. Those joining our party are doing so out of ideological commitment, a conviction that our party has a principled ideological perspective.

But the past two and half years have also revealed many shortcomings and limitations.

In particular we have not been able to match our major increase in membership with an adequate organisational consolidation. This in turn relates to limitations, some of which are more or less objective, and others are the result of our own weaknesses.

The most obvious, objective difficulties relate to our extremely limited resources – material and, perhaps especially, human (in terms of availability). Many of our best party members are engaged full-time (or prioritise work) in the ANC, COSATU, etc.

What has been lacking from our side has been a realistic strategic perspective of the role of the SACP, not in general terms, but specifically, in terms of:

★ the concrete organisational alignment

## WHAT IS SOCIALISM?

**Socialism is a transitional social system between capitalism (and other systems based on class oppression and exploitation) and a fully classless, communist society.**

of progressive forces in our country in the present;

★ the obvious possibility and need for a division of labour within the ANC-led alliance; and

★ our own potential strengths and obvious objective limitations.

We need to map out a few clear strategic tasks for the SACP. These tasks need to relate to what we can do well, to what we specifically stand for, and to what we can perhaps do better than others.

All of this relates directly to:

## B. OUR APPROACH TO SOCIALISM

### What is socialism?

Socialism is a transitional social system between capitalism (and other systems based on class oppression and exploitation) and a fully classless, communist society.

The socialist transition may well be of long duration. The transition may also be marked by contradictions, stagnation and major reverses. History is never a

smooth process, nor does it have a guaranteed outcome.

As a transitional system, socialism inevitably has a "mixed", contradictory character – whether in the ownership and control of the economy, or in all other spheres of society. The socialist transition is opened up at the point at which (as our party's *Manifesto* notes) there is a decisive "development of...popular democracy to a position of dominance in all spheres – political, economic, social and cultural." (p.22).

In this regard the *Manifesto* lists:

- ★ "● The development of a vast network of democratic organs of popular participation in both the economy and the political system under the leadership of the working class;
- ★ ● The restructuring of the state so as to establish state apparatuses shaped to relate directly and continuously with these popular structures; and
- ★ ● A decisive increase of the sectors of economy under social control and subject to democratic planning. In other words, a decisive weakening of the capitalist economy which is driven by exploitation and by the pursuit of profit rather than the needs of the people." (p.22)

In speaking of **social control** of the economy the *Manifesto* notes that:

- ★ "This democratic participation is compatible with various forms of ownership of the means of production. These include state, municipal, collective, co-operative and small-scale, non-exploitative family owned

enterprises. In other words, state ownership (or nationalisation) is neither sufficient, nor is it necessarily always the only or most effective form of socialist ownership."

There is no magic blueprint for socialism. Socialism is also not a foreign country. If we are to build socialism in South Africa, it will have to be rooted in our own realities, our own rich experience and traditions of revolutionary struggles.

But is socialism possible "in one country"?

### **Socialism in one country?**

When the Bolsheviks began the socialist revolution in 1917, they saw their own revolution as a precursor, even as a holding operation, for a major socialist revolution that would sweep through the more advanced capitalist countries of western Europe in a matter of years, if not months. Traditionally, socialism had always been seen as an internationalist task.

When, by the early 1920s, it was clear that the revolution in the West had been rolled back, an isolated Soviet Union was faced with a terrible choice. Deepen the process of socialist democracy, with all the risks of possible defeat; or embark on a forced march of industrialisation to catch up (at least militarily) with the imperialist powers. It was this latter course that was chosen, not without an extended and bitter inner-Party (and indeed intra-Comintern) struggle.

This choice, and the circumstances under which it was taken, has had much to do with the subsequent history of the former Soviet Union – the outstanding achievements and the terrible distortions and ultimate stagnation and collapse.



Under the banner of "socialism in one country", and at huge cost, a backward feudal country was transformed, in decades, into the second world power.

We will not enter here into the debate about the desirability and/or inevitability of this particular process in the Soviet Union. The question we pose here is: Is the path of "socialism in one country" a possibility in South Africa?

We believe it is highly improbable. Among the major factors permitting a "socialism in one country" path of development in the former Soviet Union were:

- its vast territory;
- its massive, untapped natural resources;
- its huge population – over 200 million; and
- the major dislocation of the world capitalist system in the 1920s through to the mid-1940s.

These factors do not apply to South Africa, or to the world in which we live. This is not to say that we cannot make major revolutionary advances **towards** socialism within our own country. But the construction, deepening and defence of socialism is, at best, highly improbable within our own country **on its own**. The cause of socialism is not advanced (it is discredited among the working masses) by premature announcements of its implementation.

This is not to preach passivism or defeatism. But it does point to the absolute necessity for an internationalist revolutionary perspective and practice. Despite its dominance and its resilience, the world capitalist system is presently in deep structural crisis. There are major dislocations between the so-called North and South. Within many of the main capitalist centres, internal structural

contradictions are sharpening.

More and more capitalism shows itself to be without answers to (in fact, often as **the** cause of) the main crises facing humanity – hunger, the destruction of the environment, joblessness, massive and growing inequalities. The advance to socialism within our own country depends considerably on the regrouping and resurgence of left forces world-wide in the face of these challenges.

### **Our critique of bureaucratic socialism**

In our Manifesto (and also in the earlier *Path to Power*) we rejected the administrative command economic systems of bureaucratic socialism.

We have also committed ourselves in our Manifesto and in our Constitution to:

- multi-party democracy and regular elections;
- a justiciable bill of rights;
- "numerous independent mass democratic formations";
- both representative **and** participatory democracy, and the general empowerment of the people.

Our criticisms of distorted socialism and our positive commitments to certain democratic values will, however, simply remain piecemeal or, even worse, look like belated concessions, defensive attempts to "prove our democratic credentials" ... **UNLESS THEY ARE RELATED TO** a coherent approach to the kind of socialism we are trying to build.

Indeed, our criticism of the administrative command system, of bureaucratism and our support for representative and participatory democracy **ARE implicitly** part of a coherent approach to socialism. But we have not yet adequately developed this.

### **Positive lessons from the critique of bureaucratic socialism**

It was precisely the existence of an administrative command system (and the equation of this with socialism) that meant in the Soviet Union and eastern Europe the withering away of any mass democratic movement (including effective trade unions). There is no place for wage bargaining, for instance, let alone trade union involvement in policy formation, if everything is centrally (and bureaucratically) planned.

In turn, the administrative command system went hand in hand with:

- the one party state (and the disappearance of effective representative democracy);
- bureaucratism;
- which in turn spawned unconstitutionality and, in the Stalin years in particular, massive criminal abuses.

Our party has already condemned these errors and injustices. But our condemnation, so far, has often tended to be a moral criticism. There is nothing wrong with a moral criticism, but clearly we need to carry through a more far-reaching Marxist analysis as well.

What are the implications of all of this for the socialism we should be trying to build in our country? Among the major implications are the following:

### **The socialism we should be building**

- i) will not be (one) party-centred, or state-centred – which is not to deny the importance of both a Marxist party (or parties) and a socialist state.
- ii) that is, it will be rooted in working class and broad mass participation – both to make the socialist breakthrough, and to develop and deepen it.

- iii) therefore, socialism will be essentially fought for, developed and defended, not bureaucratically, but by a **popular movement**.

Specifically, in South African conditions this means:

- i) socialism will need to be, not an SACP monopoly, but a project which comes to be endorsed overwhelmingly from within the broad ANC and MDM;
- ii) that is, a more **pluralistic notion** of socialism becomes necessary. It is a project to which we seek to win a wide range of forces (civics, trade unions, churches, youth and students, rural people, cultural workers, other political formations, etc.). In relating to this wide range of forces, we also understand that we do not have a monopoly or a copyright on socialism. Many of these formations have deep roots in the South African working class. There is much we can **learn** (perhaps even about socialism) from their diverse strengths.

The need for a more pluralistic approach to the struggle for socialism also relates to the character of the working class. The broad working class in South Africa is not homogeneous [see SOUTH AFRICAN WORKING CLASS below].

- iii) socialism is not so much a separate entity from the national democratic revolution, as a crucial part of, or stage in deepening and defending it.
- iv) therefore, in the course of the national democratic revolution we should continuously seek to create momentum **towards** socialism, capacity **for** socialism, and even elements **of** socialism. Amongst other things this means:

- a reconstruction process that greatly



increases the size and social weight of the employed and organised proletariat (this includes, amongst other things, major emphasis on job creation) [see RECONSTRUCTION PACT below];

- empowering the working class (organisationally, economically, culturally) – this includes increasing working class influence within the state, and developing and strengthening institutions of participatory and direct democracy;
- propagating an anti-capitalist, socialist perspective.

### Implications of the above for party-building

- i) We are building a Communist Party **within** a broad ANC-led liberation alliance, and **within** a still broader mass democratic movement. The fact that there is a major ANC-led NLM, and a mass democratic movement in our country, and that the SACP is deeply rooted within them, is an enormous strength in our revolutionary struggle for socialism. It is not some unfortunate historical legacy.

Within the context of this broad popular movement we need to avoid narrow, competitive duplication of functions. The SACP, for instance, needs to avoid trying to do everything the ANC does, only with a slightly more left inflection. Instead, we need to concentrate on well-planned, quality interventions.

The SACP is certainly the most effective, the most respected and the most coherent socialist political party in our country. But the fate of socialism in our country does not depend only on the fate of the SACP. Indeed, the evolution and

developing character of the ANC and MDM are also critical to this outcome.

Either way, the evolving role of the SACP will also depend upon the development of the liberation alliance as a whole. Depending on different possible trajectories of this overall alliance, the SACP will need to adapt its own role and organisational character.

If the national liberation struggle is successfully hijacked by some liberal project, or undermined by general chaos; if our NLM unity is broken and our national democratic strategic purpose is lost, the SACP may well need to assume a more autonomous character.

In such circumstances it might, for instance, be essential to focus on building a massive and independent electoral base for the SACP; to build the SACP as a major oppositional force to the elected government. But a situation in which this became a prime focus of our efforts would clearly be extremely unfortunate. It would represent a temporary (but perhaps long enduring) strategic defeat for our entire national liberation struggle. It is a possible, but far from necessary, medium-term outcome.

While we must not rule out such a possibility, and while we should have the capacity to survive it, nothing in what we do now should simply concede in advance such a major defeat – eg. a narrow, SACP “go it alone” attitude; or, loose, generalising and demoralised assumptions that the “ANC (in its entirety) has sold out”, etc.

There is, of course, a real and ongoing struggle **within** our entire NLM over strategic direction; over the class bias



and character of the ANC; and against opportunism and its twin in careerism – demagogic populism. Conducting this internal struggle, in a transparent and constructive manner, from a principled socialist perspective is one of, perhaps even **the** most important of tasks for the SACP.

ii) The party's vanguard role is more as a generaliser, a unifier and a strategist. It seeks to play this role by winning consent **within** the broad popular movement, the new historic bloc. We do not aspire to a monopoly of power, either in making the socialist revolution, or in an ensuing socialist state. We do not operate through manipulation of allied formations, nor do we act as though we had some superior knowledge "guaranteed by the inevitable outcome of history".

iii) The **size** of the SACP is less critical than its strategic **role** within this broad social movement. Obviously the party needs to have a certain critical weight (with a membership of over 40,000 we already have such a weight). Quality cadre development is one critical area in which the party can make a difference.

iv) Cadre development means, among other things, developing tens of thousands of working class activists who are capable of elaborating and sustaining the socialist perspective, in a non-dogmatic manner, through the length and breadth of the broad mass movement, and over the long haul of a difficult struggle.

v) If the party is to play the role of a socialist vanguard by way of active relating and undogmatic engagement with a range of social forces, then the

party's own internal life needs to equip its membership for such a role. Amongst other things, this means open and dynamic debate needs to be encouraged within the party itself. It is important that we overcome the stifling effects of pseudo-Marxist dogmatism. The party needs to be built on a real unity, not a dogmatic unity. The party's theoretical positions need to be scientific (that is, open for debate and discussion), that is, living. Those who differ, either inside our party or outside of it are not, by definition, renegades, traitors, counter-revolutionaries, etc. (Which is not, of course, to say that there are never any renegades or traitors!)

The character and tasks of the SACP should, then, be defined to a large extent by the kind of socialism we hope to build, and by the related perspective we have of the path to that kind of socialism.

But the nature and tasks of the SACP also need to be informed by the character of the class we hope to represent.

### C. THE SOUTH AFRICAN WORKING CLASS

There has been major restructuring of the South African working class over the last 20 years:

● On the one hand **unemployment** has grown massively. Many workers have all but lost the chance of ever working in the formal wage sector of the economy. There are now some 7 million unemployed in our country.

● On the other hand, those workers who have kept their jobs, and especially unionised workers, have often gained materially from the restructuring. For many,



but not all, skills have been upgraded, and there has been a rise in real wages. Faced with the double challenge of economic crisis and the growing power of the union movement, management has adopted the general strategy of retrenching, while upgrading and paying higher wages to a smaller but more skilled workforce.

● At the same time, the **employed** black working class has itself become more stratified, with growing numbers moving into supervisory, lower white-collar, technical and semi-professional work.

Put another way, the major COSATU (and SACP) working class constituency (typically, semi-skilled industrial black workers) constitutes a strategically critical, but minority stratum of the South African working class. This stratum is flanked by:

● On the one hand, millions of more marginalised workers. These include non-unionised unskilled workers; most migrants; rural labourers; those employed in the informal sector; and the millions of unemployed. Together, these millions of relatively marginalised workers represent up to 70% of the working class in our country.

● On the other hand, there are clerical workers, artisans, semi-professionals, and the higher level professional and technical workers. In a trend that will continue and even accelerate, there are now increasing numbers of blacks in these categories (although there is still a preponderance of whites).

At the same time the restructuring of the economy has also had a dramatic impact on white workers. Increasing numbers of white workers are unemployed, and in general they are experiencing a major deterioration in their liv-

**...a major restructuring of our economy and society... is in the overall interest of all working people in our country...**

ing conditions.

The SACP needs to pay the closest attention to the differences and possible contradictions that can develop within the working and popular masses themselves – between employed and unemployed; between older and younger working people; between skilled and unskilled; between “professional” and non-“professional”; between industrial workers and others, including those working in the so-called informal sector; between unionised and non-unionised; between settled and migrant; between urban and rural workers; between men and women workers; and between workers with different cultural backgrounds.

Numerous differences can and do often result in real contradictions and real differences of interest. This fact underlines the importance of a **pluralistic, multi-partite and participatory** approach to national democratic and socialist transformation.

At the same time, a major restructuring of our economy and society, based on growth through redistribution, in which priority is given to job creation, housing, health-care, education and infrastructural development, is in the overall interest of all working people in our country. As a party seeking to represent the immediate and longer-term interests of the entire working class, the

SACP needs at all times to underline the broader perspective, the overall picture.

**Both** the internal differences within the working class, and the broader unifying interest in major restructuring of our society are **objective** realities. We need to grasp the reality of both. We must not suppress or deny differences, but nor should we allow such differences to overwhelm the broader, unifying project. These points are critical if we are to develop a socialist project around a broad movement centred on the working masses.

### Implications for party-building

The character of the South African working class presents special challenges and difficult organisational-strategic choices for the SACP.

In 1990 we took the strategic decision to emphasise the building of our party in the main industrial centres, focusing on organised, industrial workers for recruitment. There were a number of reasons for this choice, including:

- the obvious support we already enjoyed in these quarters;
- the need to strengthen (and transform) the social character of our party, including its leadership, with a major influx of experienced proletarian cadres; and
- the strategic importance of organised, industrial workers.

In the absence of a detailed party census it is impossible to have a fully accurate picture of how successful this recruitment emphasis has been in practice. But we suggest that the SACP's present geographical strength and its core cadreship is, in fact, largely drawn from this stratum of the working class.

The SACP, however, should seek to represent and defend the entire working

class, not least those who are most desperate, those who are most marginalised. How do we best realise this requirement?

The marginalised 70% of the working class is, precisely, very often the most difficult to reach and the most difficult to organise, except perhaps in periodic mobilising drives; or through systematic developmental work (literacy training, co-operative projects, etc.). Industrial workers are partially organised and skilled by the (capitalist) production process itself. But the rural poor, unemployed youth, rural labourers, etc., are characteristically scattered, disorganised and unskilled.

How then, **as a party**, do we take up the challenge of work in this area?

If we go for the option of throwing all or most of our resources on organising these marginalised sectors **into** the SACP, do we not risk falling between two stools? We might dissipate our limited resources, and lose our core strategic cadreship.

An alternative emphasis would be to use the SACP to stimulate efforts in the direction of the marginalised working class. In other words, the SACP should struggle for an ANC, with all its resources, that is biased in this direction. We should be in the forefront of efforts to empower MDM structures and developmental efforts directed at the marginalised, without seeking to take over, or organise these ourselves. We should espouse, as a central component of democratisation, a reconstruction process that addresses the needs of the marginalised.

This is an argument about **emphasis** and about strategic allocation of SACP resources and efforts. We are certainly



not arguing that the SACP should have no independent presence amongst the most marginalised strata of the working class. We are not arguing that we should never organise developmental programmes in the rural areas, or that we should never run literacy classes. But these should be seen, perhaps, as pilot projects and example-setters. We are arguing, in other words, for a strategic understanding of how best we serve the interests of all workers in our country, with the particular strengths and the particular limitations of the SACP.

### **Inner working class differences and anti-democratic projects**

The inner differences and contradictions among the working masses also relate directly to real or potential counter-projects:

● On the one hand, there is the “**liberal**” project (“Low Intensity Democracy”), which seeks to detach organised, skilled and semi-skilled industrial workers from the broader popular masses. This project is connected to big business’s version of a social contract/accord/pact. An elite stratum of industrial workers would have improved work and social conditions in exchange for higher productivity and greater labour peace.

Change in South Africa would benefit a stratum of the working class, at the grave expense of the great majority of the more peripheralised, less skilled, less organised or simply unemployed working class (this is why such a project is sometimes referred to as a 70/30% solution – but 30/70% would be more accurate).

Such a project would hope to stabilise monopoly capital and a new black administrative/state middle stratum

would also be drawn into the deal. (Our campaign for clean and democratic government, now and in the future, needs to be related to this question.) Politically, this would produce a kind of “neo-colonialism of a special type”, N-CST.

There are some resemblances between this liberal project and social democratic dispensations in certain advanced capitalist countries. Without exaggerating or underrating the positive achievements of these dispensations elsewhere, in a country like South Africa, in which there is a massive “4th world” population, social democratic-style pacts hold out very little hope for any enduring resolution of our enormous social and economic crisis – apart from their sheer injustice.

● There is also the possibility of a **right-wing** counter-revolutionary project. Likely active, organisational centres for such a project are fairly obvious – reactionary elements from the SADF and SAP, elements from bantustan administrations, the organised neo-fascist extreme right groups, etc. But for such a project to have any enduring potential, it would need to have a broad social base as well.

This social base would need to be drawn, amongst other things, from among the broader working class. In this case, the target would tend to be largely at the other end of the working class spectrum from those workers targeted in the Low Intensity Democracy/N-CST project.

In the counter-revolutionary project, the social base would be sought for among the most peripheralised, the most disorganised and desperate – the unemployed, migrants, anarchistic youth, refugees, rural people (here the examples of Unita, MNR, and our own local experience

with vigilante forces of all kinds are instructive).

These two anti-democratic projects (the liberal and the ultra-right) underline the need, from our side, for a politics that is neither blind to the real differences within the working class, nor neglects the crucial need for a pluralistic, working class and popular unity. Both the neglect of differences and the neglect of unity building can open up space within the popular masses for "liberal" and right-wing projects.

### A NEW HEGEMONIC BLOC

It is in developing a hegemonic project that the working class will best be able to unify itself and counter alternative anti-democratic projects.

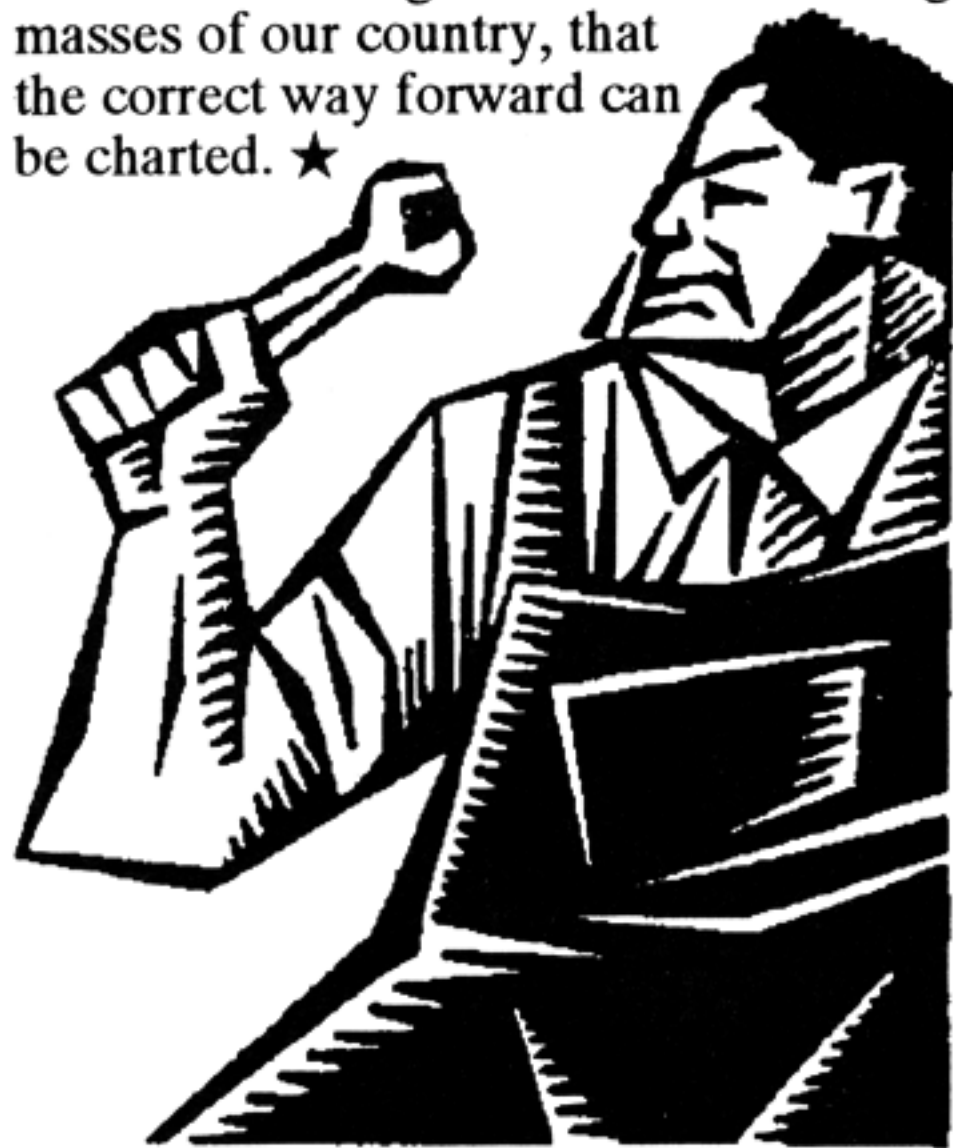
In part, this means that the SACP and broader workers' movement must avoid **confining** themselves to mere denunciations of the evils of the capitalist system – although such denunciations are, of course, essential. We must also avoid **confining** ourselves to purely rearguard struggles in defence of workers' interests – although, again, such struggles are important. If, however, the workers' movement limits itself to denunciation and defence, it risks isolating itself, locking itself into a restricted and unmanoeuvrable position.

The SACP must, with all allied formations, seek to develop the working class in our country as the hegemonic, the leading class. In other words, we seek to develop the working class as a force which is capable of leading our society in every respect, capable of solving the crisis that reaches into every aspect of our society's fabric – economically, culturally, morally and politically.

Amongst other things this means that, in a situation such as our own, in which the South African capitalist system is in deep crisis, the workers' movement needs to be, not a factor for dissolution, but the leading force for reconstruction and renewal along lines that open the road for a socialist transformation. We must reject "the worse the better" type notions. Socialist oriented development will not spring from the total collapse of the capitalist economy.

We must intervene in the crisis of capitalism not to rescue capitalism, but in such a way as to develop the leading role of the working class, building around it a bloc of social forces, giving South Africa a new political leadership and initiating a process of profound renewal and transformation.

It is around a major reconstruction process, driven jointly by a national democratic state, the NLM and by a wide range of mass democratic formations, anchored among the broad working masses of our country, that the correct way forward can be charted. ★





## *PART TWO:* **A RECONSTRUCTION PACT**

**T**he South African economy and the wider social fabric are in deep crisis. A wide range of forces agree that major restructuring (economic, political and social) is required. Already the present white and capitalist dominated ruling bloc is endeavouring to manage a process of restructuring that will stabilise the situation from their own point of view. Although they may succeed in imposing this project, it will be based on the perpetuation of major inequalities in our society, and, partly for that reason, it will have little prospect of success, even on its own limited terms.

It is imperative that the broad liberation movement advances a coherent alternative. But this alternative needs to be more than a set of policies on paper. The manner in which this alternative is elaborated, fought for and defended is absolutely critical to its success. The elaboration of the alternative must itself be democratic, multi-partite, mobilising, and working class-powered. It must emerge from the broad mass movement and it must in turn become a critical factor in deepening the unity and mobilisation of that movement.

A reconstruction pact is not a traditional tri-partite, social contract signed by trade unions, capital and the state.

- It must involve the entire, broad MDM, and not just trade unions representing organised, employed workers.

- The pact is the basis for a broad national democratic alliance, an alliance

between the MDM and a future national democratic state.

Obviously those forces involved in this alliance will have to interact with other forces, including capital (both local and international). These interactions may themselves result in negotiated agreements (and even perhaps pacts/accords) of all kinds, but the interactions must at all times be guided and strengthened by the institutional and policy framework of the reconstruction pact.

It is in this context that the elaboration of a RECONSTRUCTION PACT must be understood and encouraged. A reconstruction pact should be approached with the following broad perspectives:

- It is, in the first place, a pact between the major, mass-based, democratic, sectoral formations and the ANC as the likely dominant political formation within a new, democratic government. From the side of the MDM formations this means, in practice, that COSATU, in particular, and SANCO will have to take a leading role. But many other MDM formations (women, rural, youth, educational, religious, cultural, etc.) need to be brought into the process. So do many NGOs/service organisations in an advisory capacity.

- The reconstruction pact needs to be seen as a process, rather than a once-off contract negotiated between the main players. The detail and depth of the reconstruction pact need to be enhanced

over the years.

● However, it is also imperative to have at least agreed upon and set in place the major framework of the reconstruction pact **before** any national, democratic elections. The pact needs, in part, to become the basis for a broad, popular electoral platform.

### Where does the SACP fit in?

The SACP will have a critical facilitating and theorising role in this process. The present process leading up to our consultative conference needs to be seen centrally in this light. In fact the SACP has the capacity, given its deep strategic rootedness within both the ANC and COSATU, as well as its own inherent mobilising and theorising potential, to make a crucial difference between success and failure.

Indeed, already in the unfolding discussion that has begun to occur on the Reconstruction Pact, it is becoming clear that the SACP has important contributions to make in a number of areas:

Within the trade union movement (where discussion on this topic was pioneered and where discussion is most advanced) there are tendencies to conceive the pact largely, if not exclusively, as a macro-economic programme, or even as a kind of economic/civil society CODESA. There are very serious limitations in these tendencies:

● In the first place, these are essentially economistic tendencies. The question of state power is ignored. Or, insofar as the future state is considered, these approaches tend to prepare the MDM for a defensive or even largely oppositional role. By contrast, we need to ensure that the transformation of state structures is

integral to the reconstruction process. We need to include, crucially, discussion and programmes on the transformation of the armed forces and the state bureaucracy in the whole Reconstruction Pact process;

● We also need to guard against a tendency to conceive of the Pact as a narrow process of economic **distribution**. This kind of conception tends to marginalise the core question – the empowerment/self-empowerment of the popular masses.

In some of the discussions around the Reconstruction Pact there are also tendencies to marginalise the broader southern African regional questions. The SACP's internationalism needs to be brought to bear. There can be no stable reconstruction within South Africa, while our region is racked with starvation, economic collapse, huge refugee problems and civil war. The legacy of apartheid is not a purely domestic legacy. Reconstruction itself is, therefore, broader than our country.

These are just some specific areas where it is already apparent that the SACP's specific socialist, working class, internationalist input is required to strengthen the Reconstruction Pact process.

### An institutional and policy dimension

The reconstruction pact needs to embrace both an **institutional** and a **policy** dimension.

● **Institutionally** the pact needs to elaborate a whole range of institutions of participatory and direct democracy. Already some of these are in place, or in the process of being put in place – a national economic forum, a housing forum, an education forum, etc. The pact must



commit its signatories to taking seriously these forums, and to help to develop and enhance them.

These forums will not replace or displace the institutions of representative democracy. Prime among the institutions of representative democracy will be the new, democratic parliament, which should be the supreme authority (although, obviously, its decisions should always be within the constitutional framework and open to challenge by mass action, protests, etc.). The institutions of participatory and direct democracy should supplement those of representative democracy. These forums need to be at all levels – national, regional and local.

The success of any attempt at reconstruction depends, ultimately, on the organised power of all sectors of the oppressed masses that stand to benefit from broad reconstruction. We need to ensure that the people are organised on as broad a basis as possible, and on every level that is necessary to secure these goals.

The pact must commit the participants to the recognition that crucial areas of governance (economic development, housing, education, etc.) shall be subject to negotiations by the main, relevant players within civil society in the appropriate forum before being passed in the national parliament, or at the regional or local government level.

The pact must also commit a future democratic state to meeting some of the

financial needs of these participatory democratic forums. Such financial support must not, however, undermine the autonomy of these forums.

Institutionally, the reconstruction pact must also envisage a lean but effective state. The success of the pact depends upon effective and coherent implementation, and in this respect a trim but capable democratic state will be critical.

● **Policy** — the reconstruction pact must

be based on the macro-economic and social policy of growth through redistribution. Without ignoring the need to develop the export sector of our economy, the main thrust of this redistribution should be large-scale inward industrialisation, expanding and widening (through rising employment) the domestic and sub-continental market. The emphasis must be on housing, education and electrification and infrastructural develop-

ment to promote employment, stimulate the manufacturing sector and redistribute resources, including skills, to urban and rural communities.

## Potential difficulties and weaknesses

A reconstruction pact is not a magic blueprint. Its successful elaboration and implementation will encounter many obstacles and much resistance.

Some of the potential problems lie on our side. The pact is based upon a strong MDM but, apart from COSATU, many of the major MDM sectors are in a weak-



**...the reconstruction pact must be based on the macro-economic and social policy of growth through redistribution.**

ened state. We need to be realistic about the actual capacity of the main MDM formations to develop and sustain a pact. Of course, we must not be fatalistic about MDM weaknesses, we need to strengthen the MDM and we also need to use the pact itself to help this strengthening.

The Reconstruction Pact will provide a broad ANC-led MDM alliance with a strategic programme for the immediate and medium-term future. But, needless to say, its implementation will meet with varying degrees of opposition from other forces, both local and international. However, this opposition need not be absolute and total. Just as with the political negotiations around a new constitutional dispensation, there is both a degree of cross-class consensus (making multi-party negotiations and a transitional arrangement possible) as well as different hegemonic agendas.

Major sectors of South African and international capital recognise the need for significant restructuring and reconstruction. They recognise the need to overcome at least some of the socio-economic legacy of apartheid. Their motivation for this is, of course, to stabilise capitalism in our country and our region, and return the system to profitability. Their motivation is not the empowerment of the working people of our coun-

try, or the democratisation of the economy.

But this partial (and certainly limited) cross-class consensus is an asset, which must neither be exaggerated nor ignored. The implementation of the reconstruction process will require both negotiation and struggle with other forces. Over-reliance on one or the other could spell defeat.

The probability of a power-sharing, transitional government arrangement in the coming period, underlines the above point. Reconstruction must proceed as rapidly as possible, even within this transitional period. It must not wait for a full, majority-rule dispensation.

However, the ability of a multi-party government to deliver will almost certainly be restricted. We need to win as much broad consensus as possible for reconstruction, but we will also, inside and outside of government, have to struggle against, and publicly expose, those who block democratic reconstruction. Our mass forces will need to check and balance tendencies within government to water down programmes. Above all, through mass organisation and struggle we will need to defend and strengthen the hand of our own governmental representatives. ★



# Towards a socialist economy: Observations from abroad

by  
Michael Tanzer  
and Idrian Resnick

## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to enter the debate/discussion in the *African Communist* on the topic of "Towards a Socialist Economy", using as a departure point the impressive paper by trade unionist Alec Erwin on "Economic Reconstruction" (AC, 2nd Quarter 1992). While neither of the present authors claims to be an expert on South Africa, together we have over 50 years of experience working for progressive Third World governments and non-governmental organisations in confronting multinational corporations and in devising alternative development strategies.

Our interest in entering this debate is twofold. First, as socialists, we believe the issues raised in the debate are not just confined to South Africa, but are world-wide. A discussion needs to be conducted on an international basis. Second, and more immediately, as long-time activists in the US anti-apartheid movement, we were both invited as re-

source personnel to a conference held in New York City "in support of the ANC and other democratic forces for a new South Africa" (November 13-15, 1992). We participated in two days of workshops on the key issue of "Investment Policy and Economic Development", and quite frankly were deeply disturbed by the conservative political tendencies within this workshop. (It needs to be pointed out that many of the participants were members of the African-American and black South African bourgeoisie).

Most strikingly, workshop participants seemed to have a lack of understanding of the real nature of international capital and its goals regarding South Africa, as well as a very strong focus on an external strategy as opposed to the kind of internal strategy more implicit in Alec Erwin's article. But, even in the latter, we find certain ambiguities that, in our opinion, could lead to misconceived strategies. So, in the spirit of friendly and constructive debate, we

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offer the following observations based largely on our own experience as international consultants and as analysts of economic development and international capitalism.

Our observations will be organised along three lines. First, an overview of problems of dealing with international capital, with particular focus on South Africa. Second, a brief conceptual discussion of the nature of what an "inward strategy" would involve, as opposed to focusing on foreign investment and an export strategy. Finally, an analysis of the extent to which one can harness the two strategies in today's world, particularly in South Africa.

### **1. Problems in dealing with international capital**

The confusions which exist about the role of international capital, in our opinion, stem partly from the fact that progressive/revolutionary political leaders' experience too often does not equip them to deal with international capital. By way of example, in the New York conference workshops mentioned above, which in general had a very positive approach toward international capital invested in South Africa, we raised the following comment/question: "The problem is not that international corporations are evil, but the logic of profit maximisation in Third World countries, which requires investors in places like South Africa to seek profit rates on their investment of at least 20 percent a year. Moreover, by the magic of compound interest, or more concretely, of capitalist accumulation, this means that for every one dollar that a foreign company invests, over a twenty-five year period it will make a profit of 95 dollars. Given this,

**The confusions which exist about the role of international capital stem partly from the fact that revolutionary leaders' experience too often does not equip them to deal with international capital.**

we ask, is it worthwhile to obtain an initial one dollar of foreign investment?"

Our question drew two types of responses from the panellists. One argument was along the lines of, okay, maybe the foreigners do make a profit of 95 dollars, but they generate economic growth which is good for the country. A second line of argument was that, while progressive South Africans are aware of the dangers of big multinational corporations, they are looking for investment in South Africa from small and medium-sized firms, particularly those of African-Americans, perhaps backed by US government support.

The problem with the first argument is that not only does the foreign company seek to make a profit of at least 95 dollars for its initial one dollar investment, but in addition it normally seeks to take its profits out of the country in the form of foreign currency as rapidly as possible. Thus, the growth of foreign investment inevitably leads to negative pressures on the country's balance of payments, which in turn act as a major constraint on the domestic economy. Insofar as foreign investment normally tends also to be



**... there seems to be a persistent belief that, first, you can't do without foreign capital, and second, somehow you can tame it and put it to your own uses without serious negative effects.**

located in sectors of the economy such as mining and manufacturing, which require large imports of capital goods, this further intensifies balance of payments pressures. Finally, the tragedy of the situation for a country like South Africa is that new progressive economic and social policies will be seen by foreign capital as a threat, and therefore it will seek an even higher rate of profit and a faster repatriation of capital to offset the "risk" of investment.

As for the argument that South Africa's hope lies in attracting investment from small and medium-sized businesses, we believe this is at best naive. Experience shows that such firms are no less rapacious than large multinational corporations.

We might note that many panellists seemed to assume that simply transferring resources from the major white conglomerates which own the country now to small and medium-size black business (possibly through the mechanism of anti-trust, which was favoured by a number of speakers) would be a solution to the problem of foreign investment.

While such a "solution" might sim-

ply be seen as self-serving, it overlooks the historical fact that simply switching from white capital to black-owned capital (which in fact often may be fronting for whites), even if it could be achieved, exacerbates the internal class conflicts within the country, between the indigenous bourgeoisie and the working class. Moreover, Third World experience has shown that money has no colour nor loyalty to the nation. Down the road, if a progressive South African government would attempt to curb its black capitalists, we are sure that it would then see a flight of black capital as great as that by white capital.

While readers of the *African Communist* undoubtedly are well aware of these general dangers of foreign capital, still there seems to be a persistent belief that, first, you can't do without foreign capital, and second, somehow you can tame it and put it to your own uses without serious negative effects. In our view, these increasingly widespread beliefs among progressive forces are mistaken, and the result of two recent events.

First, the collapse of the actually existing "socialist" world has meant that the belief in socialist planning has been greatly weakened. In fact, more than this, the absence of socialist states which could provide an alternative source of external capital to newly progressive nations, means that the focus of potential foreign capital has switched to western industrial countries. Second, and related, the collapse of the socialist world has obscured the fact that the capitalist world itself is going through an enormous structural crisis of stagnation, and in our opinion is just entering the early stages of basic decline. Failure to correctly as-

sess these developments, in our opinion, has led to illusions among progressives about the nature of the new world order, and hence to incorrect strategic decisions.

For example, Alec Erwin, in defending his basically correct "growth through redistribution" strategy, has argued:

★ "I have little doubt that a revival of the growth rate is important...Indeed, experience elsewhere shows clearly that it is best to restructure industry on the upturn of the economic cycle, not on the down-turn.

★ "But is a growth revival possible? The answer must be yes. It will result from the so-called 'apartheid dividend' (the benefits that will flow from the demise of apartheid)...

★ "Political stability will have a positive impact on business confidence and will open access to international assistance. Increased tourism could also have beneficial growth effects." (pp.21-2)

The errors of Erwin's analysis here are twofold. First, particularly within the framework of Erwin's belief that there is a need to "expand exports of manufactured products in a way that sustains the long-term viability and competitiveness of the South and southern African economy within the world economy" (p.21). We believe that here Erwin has not fully comprehended the nature of the current world-wide capitalist crisis. This crisis is tending to drag economies around the world down rather than up, and it is a long-term structural problem, and not a short-term cyclical one. This means that in today's era of international economic stagnation, export-oriented strategies are doomed to failure.

Second, Erwin's analysis mistakes

also the basic nature of international capitalism, which is unalterably opposed to progressive governments successfully developing independent kinds of strategies, because such success would threaten international capital's hegemonic rule in all other Third World countries.

Thus, as Noam Chomsky has so brilliantly shown, the underlying US goal has been to destroy the economy and society of any country that attempts to challenge its hegemonic position. Thus, he argues, in important ways the US really won the Vietnamese war, because it so destroyed the Vietnamese society and economy that they were forced in recent years to turn toward a market economy. Similar US "successes" were achieved in Angola and Mozambique, El Salvador and Nicaragua, and this is still the bipartisan (i.e. both Republican and Democratic) goal of US policy towards Cuba. Thus, in our opinion, to believe that "international assistance", which normally means "aid" from either the governments and multi-national corporations of the industrial countries, or their instruments, the World Bank and the IMF, will be forthcoming for a socialistically-oriented South African government seems dangerously naive.

Another point with which we would take issue is the whole notion of a "growth" strategy. We believe that the fundamental goal is to have a successful "development" strategy, which may or may not involve "growth" in the normal sense of an increased gross domestic product. A brief discussion of this point will serve as a useful introduction to our analysis of some appropriate concepts for an "inward" development strategy.

The fundamental problem with "growth" strategies is that inevitably and



implicitly they assume growth in some numerical quantity which can be measured by market values. "Growth" in a diverse economy implies that you have some method of adding up all the different components of that economy, and that is usually done by valuing each component in market terms. This is the only way that one could give meaning to the statement, for example, that if the gross national product in South Africa increased from \$84 billion to \$90 billion, there was a growth of 7 percent. Underlying this growth approach also is the assumption that monetary demand is the best measure of human welfare.

There are two fundamental errors in this kind of approach. First, such market calculations omit numerous variables, such as quality of life, the environment, and all sorts of human activities which do not enter into monetary relationships and are, therefore, not recorded (e.g., household labour of women is not counted as a plus in gross domestic product, while depletion of non-renewable natural resources and the environment is not counted as a minus). Second, even if things measured by monetary demand were the most relevant ones, still there is a crucial assumption hidden under the claim that a market economy maximises human welfare – that the distribution of wealth is a just one. Thus, the most that the market ideologist can show is that for a particular distribution of wealth, free trade and competitive markets will lead

to the maximum welfare possible with that distribution. It does not say a word about whether one distribution of wealth is better than another. And we hardly need to tell South Africans that the maldistribution of the world's wealth is a central problem, and is far more unequal than the more widely commented on maldistribution of income.

The fact is that the apparent democracy of the market system is in fact the tyranny of the oligarchy – the market is a democracy only in the sense that one

dollar has one vote. Thus, in the US one family, the Walton's of Walmart stores, has twenty-six billion votes as to how society's resources should be used, or more votes than millions of poor Americans. Surely the maldistribution is even greater in South Africa, when one compares the wealth of the Oppenheimer family with that of the masses of black people. On a world-scale, when one

considers that six Japanese banks have total assets of \$2,500 billion, which is far greater than the market value of all the wealth of all Third World countries, one can see clearly how under the market economy the deck is stacked against the claims on resources by poor and Third World people. And this is the case even though Japan could not survive for one week without the Third World's various agricultural and mineral resources.

We do not wish to preach to anyone. But as progressives who have lived in

**The fundamental problem with "growth" strategies is that inevitably and implicitly they assume growth in some numerical quantity which can be measured by market values.**

the “belly of the beast” and who have confronted international capital daily, we need to stress how important it is for progressive South Africans to understand the present nature and power of international capital. South Africa today is at one of those pregnant moments in history in which the degrees of freedom are considerably greater than they are after foreign capital has a firm foothold inside the country. Making the right decisions now can greatly increase the chances for successfully protecting the interests of workers and impoverished South Africans. Making the wrong decisions now can create conditions in which it becomes virtually impossible to overcome the power of foreign capital.

The multinational corporations will make tempting offers that create the **illusion** that there are quick solutions to South Africa’s economic and social problems. However, the negative consequences of pursuing fast solutions can take decades to repair and some of them are irreversible. For example, building airports and tourist facilities can create employment in the construction industry and the promise of foreign exchange earned by the expected tourists. However, tourist industries in developing countries typically **spend** large amounts of foreign exchange on food, alcohol, transport and fixtures, considerably reducing the net foreign exchange receipts. Apart from creating a servant class, the society has created an industry that is highly sensitive to economic conditions in the industrialised world, and will be faced with weighing the consequences of internal economic and social policies in terms of their potential impact on the tourist industry.

Quick solutions lead to mistakes. For

**... the apparent democracy of the market system is in fact the tyranny of the oligarchy – the market is a democracy only in the sense that one dollar has one vote.**

example, several projects may use the same water resources in their calculations. Unless these are seen and evaluated, the fact that there is not enough water for all of them will not be seen until after the project construction. Failed projects and drawn-down water tables can be the result. Rapid project development can put unforeseen burdens on infrastructure, resulting in long-term damage or the need to lay in changes so rapidly that they can neither be planned efficiently nor can their technical consequences be evaluated. Obviously, each choice that is made limits other choices than can be made. But this simple economic principle can have disproportionately high consequences when global corporations are involved, particularly when they are producing for export.

Indigenous human and material resources have to be allocated to support these investments, to make them profitable. While providing such resources would be required for any industrial or mining activity, in the case of foreign corporations the decisions whether to remain or close their operations are made on the basis of considerations rarely fac-



**... the global debate for more than seventy years has been in terms of capitalism vs. communism. At this juncture in history, it is fair to say that both systems have failed for the same reason: the interests of those in control were antagonistic to those of the people as a whole.**

ing national (and relatively small) corporations. The United States has scores of cities and towns that paid vast sums for infrastructure to support global corporations which eventually moved out, leaving empty factories and destitute workers and communities.

Global corporations are not accountable to the governments and people of the countries in which they are operating, except within legal and contractual limits. They make their decisions on the basis of the global interests of their companies, which are often for short term profits, rather than long term development, for less than full capacity output, and for the production of product lines that do not compete with those of other branches of the company. It is not difficult to see how such decisions could be in opposition to the interests of the South African people and economy.

But this opposition of interests can be masked by the myth of the "progressive" corporation that seeks to build the new post-apartheid South Africa. Global cor-

porations' power allows them to have a disproportionate influence on decisions affecting them, such as the shaping of labour and environmental laws and regulations. And this influence grows as their workers, technical personnel and managers, often paid wages and salaries in excess of local averages, develop into a labour aristocracy whose interests are linked to those of the corporation rather than those of the nation. Thus, the myth of the progressive foreign multinational will only be revealed when it uses its power to block legislation, or break and circumvent existing laws, or when it abandons the country.

## **2. An alternative "inward" strategy**

But, the reader may say, is there an alternative to opening up the country to international capital? We believe the answer is yes. To begin with, we have to note that the global political and economic debate for more than seventy years has been in terms of capitalism vs. communism. At this juncture in history, it is fair to say that both systems have failed for the same reason: the interests of those in control were antagonistic to those of the people as a whole. It seems to us that the right question to ask now is: can a society be shaped, and an economic system constructed, based on the interests of the vast majority of the people?

What kind of economy would such a system be likely to produce in South Africa? What goals would a South African population that was allowed to speak be likely to articulate? We can imagine people saying that they want a chance to work, to have food, decent housing, clothes, items for their houses, good medical care (preventing as much sickness as possible before it occurs), clean

and accessible water, full and choice-expanding education, opportunities for cultural expression and development, and a healthy environment for themselves and their children. The production of the low-cost, high quality goods and services that such a list of material goals implies, could structure the economic development agenda for the country for at least a generation.

We believe that South Africa has, or could readily develop, the resources, capital and skills, for such a development process. It already has industries producing enough foreign exchange to purchase the imports required for such a strategy. Of course, using resources to develop the industries (most of them small scale) to meet such goals would preclude both the development of an advanced capitalist economy and significant levels of foreign investment.

There would be other consequences of choosing this internal development path, especially for most white South Africans, and those others who have gained a stake in the economy/society as it is now structured. The volume and composition of consumer goods available to the middle and upper classes would be drastically curtailed. It is not that foreign global corporations would be prohibited from coming to South Africa. It would simply not be worth their while, having little to contribute to the domestic product mix, and not being allowed to develop resources for export beyond the need for foreign exchange to support the national economic strategy.

We are not implying that such a strategy would be without problems. The need to save, to invest, to wait, would have to be explained to the people in such a way that they could choose how

and when to do that. Mistakes will be made, but if the decision-makers at every level of the society are responsible to those affected by their decisions – managers to workers, doctors to patients, etc. – people will be able to uncover mistakes and correct them.

In such a system, we can envision the people deciding to save the bulk of South Africa's natural resources for future generations, rather than developing and exporting them now. Proposed investments will be evaluated in terms of whether and how they meet articulated goals, rather than in terms of projected rates of return. Exports will be chosen in terms of targeted foreign exchange needs. We can see a period in which South Africa concentrates almost exclusively on domestic needs, gradually expanding its horizon to southern Africa.

### **3. Towards a dual path**

In the final analysis, however, it will undoubtedly be necessary in the transition stage to have at least some interactions with foreign capital. But, dealing with foreign capital on the basis of the mind-set that says it will be a beneficent part of a "mixed economy" is very different from adopting what we believe is the correct attitude – namely, that foreign capital to a healthy economy is like cancer cells in a healthy body. The goal should be to minimise them, to prevent them from metastasising, and to cut them out as quickly as feasible.

To successfully implement this approach requires first a comprehensive and concrete analysis of the nature of the particular foreign capital investment that is potentially available, and second a sophisticated strategy for utilising the investment while minimising the inevi-



table change.

By way of example, we draw on our experiences in the international fuel and minerals industry. The usual way that a foreign energy or mining corporation comes to a country like South Africa is with an offer to make an investment under which it either pays income taxes on its profits, or else forms up some kind of joint venture with the government. In either case, the goal of the multinational company is to make a profit rate of at least 20 percent per year over a 20 to 25 year period, which, as we have noted above, means that, in effect, it will be taking out \$95 for each one dollar it invested.

For a progressive government, rather than passively accepting these choices, a better way is to start by recognising that what the foreign company can provide, namely capital, technology and markets, are normally all separable. By "breaking up the package" into its components, one can bargain with all of the players which provide each of these components, in order to drive down the profits that they can get from entering into a deal with your country.

By way of a concrete example, when a big oil company like Mobil or Shell seeks a contract to explore for oil, it will typically seek a profit rate of at least 20 percent per year on its investment. It will justify this high rate on the basis of the "risk" involved. It will do so despite the fact that exploration is the only really risky part of the process, and typically accounts for only about 10 percent of the company's investment in an oil field. Thus, once oil is discovered, the 90 percent of the total investment required for developing the field should receive a relatively low profit rate because it bears

## New Economic Policy...



**... whatever policy is adopted by a democratic government will have to benefit the working class**

little risk.

In this case, breaking down the package into separate exploration and development would allow the government to negotiate with companies who are willing to take the risk of exploration, and offer them a relatively high rate of profit on their relatively small investment. But then, if oil is found, contract for the massive development expenditure at low rates of return. History has shown that such large amounts at low rates of return would be available, for example, from industrial countries in Western Europe and Japan, which lack their own oil resources and strongly desire to have assured supplies of crude oil.

Many examples could be given from other fields of mining and industry in which similar strategies of breaking down the package would be useful in minimis-

ing the amount of profits that foreign companies can take out. In addition, as part of the negotiating process, the government could obtain technology and training of its own nationals, so that the country could develop a long-run mastery over the industry.

In conclusion, we would argue that there are many forms of economic development, even those utilising capitalist methods. The one offered by an open economy and relatively unbridled foreign investment is the one that brought

the South African people to where they are today. An alternative must be found and followed, or South Africa will merely be changing the residence or the skin colour of its oppressors. The struggle to define those alternatives, in general and in concrete specific cases, is the central challenge for socialists all over the world today. We hope that our article will provide a constructive step in what must be an ongoing discussion among all progressives of goodwill. ★

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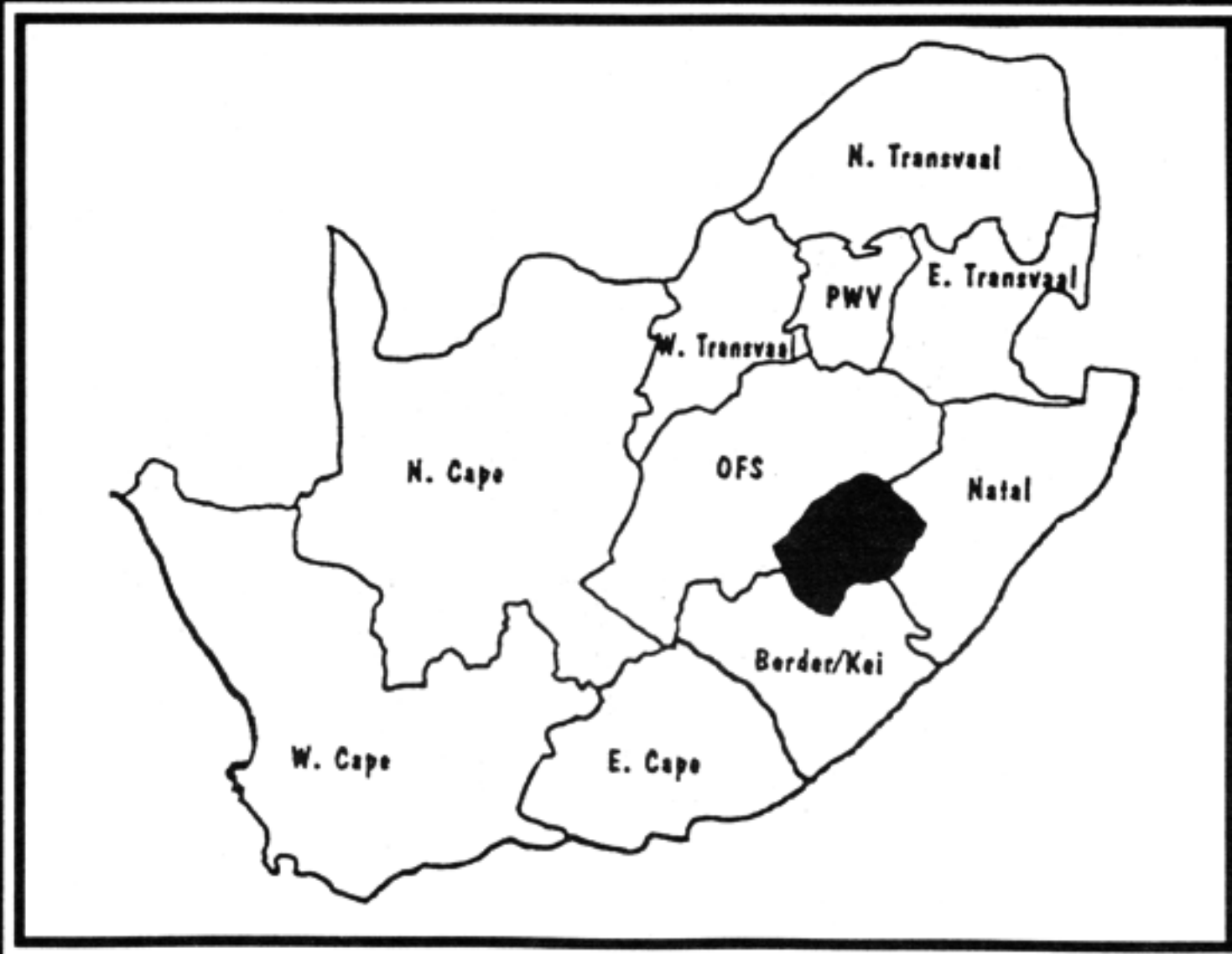
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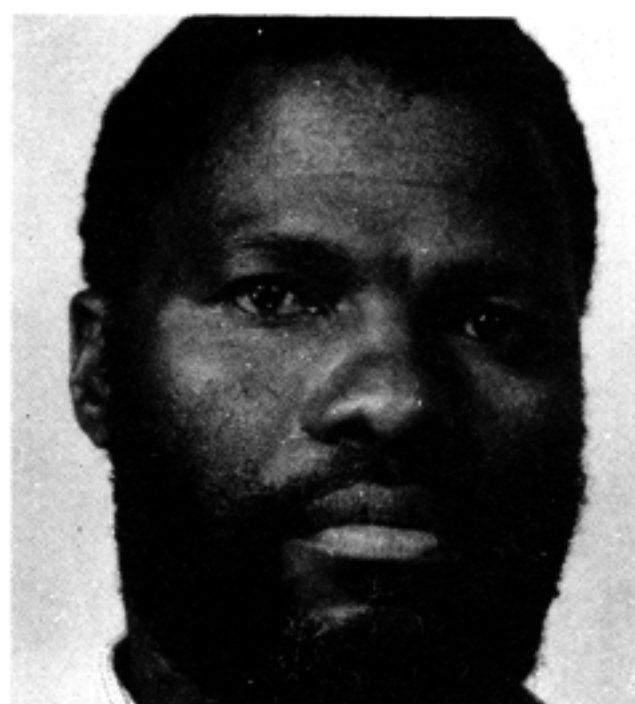
## FEDERALISM &amp; REGIONS:

# The great debate

*In the coming weeks, in the multi-party negotiations forum, and again next year, in the context of a Constituent Assembly, the debate around unitarism and federalism, and the related issue of regional demarcation will intensify.*

*From within the national liberation movement, much of our own thinking in these areas has, says Thozamile Botha, tended to be mechanical. We have tended to argue that unitarism is inherently good, federalism inherently bad.*

*When it comes to regional demarcation, ethnic considerations, calculations of party political support and historical realities have tended to dominate the debate. Very little attention has been given to a regional class analysis. Govan Mbeki opens up some discussion in this direction around the proposed "tenth region".*



# FEDERALISM VERSUS UNITARISM: Which way forward?

■ by Thozamile Botha

**W**HETHER federalism is an option for the new South Africa needs to be vigorously debated. What follows is an attempt, first, to note critically some of the theoretical assumptions that get made in the debate. Second, to consider some actual examples of federalism. And, third, to return to the South African debate, with a view to assessing whether federalism will enable us to redress the inequalities inherited from the apartheid system.

## Some theoretical remarks

The concept "federalism" means different things to different people. It tends to be defined from different perspectives — political, economic, cultural and legal — by different writers. I do not propose here to survey various, international theoretical currents. But the arguments in favour of federalism usually rest on one (or both) of two major claims.

**1.** The first is the claim that in providing for local autonomy, federalism brings government closer to the people, it gives them greater control over their lives.

**2.** The second, but often linked claim, is that federalism is able to take account of ethnic (whether racial, cultural, linguistic, religious or other) diversities within a state, and thus introduce greater stability, and a fair deal for minorities.

In South Africa, some proponents of federalism tend to emphasise the first, the "democratic" advantage (eg. the DP and to some extent the NP). Others tend to have a more "ethnic" justification (eg. the Afrikaner Volksunie, etc.).

Before we examine some concrete examples, it is useful to consider the first claim ("bringing government closer to the people") abstractly. If one accepts this line of argument (and I will consider it in more empirical detail in a moment), it amounts to an argument for **decentralisation**. But it does not explain why such decentralisation has to be federal. Decentralisation is, after all, possible within a unitary system.

But the impression created by this line of argument is that federalist forms of decentralisation will, in themselves,



guarantee citizens' democratic freedoms. In turn, for the proponents of federalism, this simple assumption suggests that federalism is good and unitarism is bad.

Posing the problem like this, as a simple dichotomy - federal or unitary—is invalid. As ANC vice president, Walter Sisulu has stated: "The crux of the matter is not whether one opts for federalism or unitarism, for every federal state has unitary features and every unitary state has federal features." (speech to Conference on Democratic Sub-National Government, 23 October 1992, p.2)

Insofar as there is a general distinction between a federal and a unitary system, it lies in the way in which powers and functions are allocated between different levels of government, and the degree to which each level of government is able to exercise its authority in a given territorial area. In a unitary system, second and third tier government is a creation of statute, where powers and functions are not listed and entrenched in the constitution, but derived from legislation. Under federalism, powers and/or functions of the second and third tiers are constitutionalised.

But does federalism, as its South African proponents maintain, necessarily bring government closer to the people, thereby guaranteeing minority rights and providing people with greater control over their lives? Is it always an assured means of dealing with cultural diversities? The next section will attempt to examine the experiences of two federal systems.

## **Federalism: a comparative experience**

Federal systems all over the world have come into existence under very specific conditions, more or less unique to each

country. Political, economic, nationalist and security considerations have been, variously, the main reasons for federal systems.

The origins of US federalism, according to Tigar and Jamail, lie in socio-economic considerations, in the slave-owning system of the Southern States:

● "...the American federal system was conceived largely to protect the interests of Southern United States slave-owners. Its origins hardly commend it as a model for South Africa." (Tigar, M and Jamail, JD, "Some thoughts on federalism", University of Texas School of Law, 1992, p.1)

Although the United States remains, formally, a federation, Tigar and Jamail believe that much of the federal content has been eroded over time:

● "'federalism' in the United States was dealt a decisive blow by the American civil war and the amendments of the United States Constitution that resulted from that war, and the anti-federal, unitary trend continued thereafter...today federalism in the United States is meaningless except as a battle cry of the reactionary jurists and legislators. The United States is in reality a unitary government in which certain powers are left to the several states." (ibid.)

The reality of a national economic market in the United States has served to make federalism increasingly irrelevant, in the estimation of Tigar and Jamail.

Power in the United States, real power, is vested in a massive federal government apparatus, not least in its military-repressive structures, in the board-rooms of major transnational corporations, and in a major capitalist controlled media industry. The erosion of many federal

features in the US constitution over the decades reflects, to some extent, the growing concentration of power and wealth in a single national (indeed transnational) class.

This is not to say that there are no residual powers at the local and state level, but to argue that there is a major devolution of power to the grass-roots level in the US as a result of its federal constitution requires a major act of constitutional romanticism.

Whereas in the United States (and Germany and Brazil) the federation emerged primarily as a result of socio-economic factors, in Switzerland the federation of 25 cantons (a 26th was added later) evolved rather as a mechanism to protect linguistic and cultural minorities (K.Nuspliger, "Federated structures of Switzerland", occasional paper, 1992). In Switzerland, the cantonal communities predate the federation.

Despite the ethnic origins of the Swiss federation, there are many cantons (states) which are occupied by more than one nationality. Nevertheless, according to Nuspliger, the linguistic, religious and other differences are not, as in the case of the US, the product of immigration, and as these still largely coincide with cantonal frontiers, there is no feeling of a need for assimilation at the national level.

There is also, apart from its historic origins, another major factor favouring relative stability in the Swiss federal dispensation. There is no coincidence of major cleavages. That is, socio-economic, religious and linguistic differences cut across each other, rather than coinciding. Thus, in different French-speaking cantons, for example, there are predominantly catholic and, in others, predominantly protestant communities.

Among economically poorer cantons there are both German and French-speaking populations. A one dimensional political conflict, for instance, between poor, catholic, French-speakers on the one hand, and rich, protestant, German-speakers on the other is improbable.

These specific realities undoubtedly account for the stability and relative success of the Swiss federal system. Even a cursory comparison with South Africa underlies the enormous differences. Patterns of land occupation in South Africa are not the result of a long and relatively organic settlement, but the consequence of relatively recent colonial conquest, immigration, mass relocations, major and dramatic industrialisation, including migrancy and rapid urbanisation, and enforced balkanisation. Recent years, with major regional wars of destabilisation, local violence and drought, are producing further dramatic population relocations within our country and throughout our region. We now have a major refugee problem within our borders.

What is more, rather than having a significant cross-cutting of differentials as in Switzerland, in South Africa there is a dramatic coincidence of race, wealth, power and privilege.

To argue, as some do, that the relative success and stability of the Swiss federal system in uniting diverse populations, proves that federalism will work in this respect for South Africa is, therefore, groundless. Ethnic federalism in South Africa may well produce the exact opposite – massive instability.

Incidentally, even in the relatively ideal federal situation of Switzerland, there are significant unitary impulses. During World War II, Switzerland, as a small



country, was surrounded by much bigger and belligerent nations. Pressure from the outside helped the Swiss to establish their own identity, for "the common interest in survival as an independent nation was more important than internal differences on cultural issues." (Nuspliger)

At present, health, education, culture, protection of the environment and natural resources, hydro-electricity, agriculture, food distribution, housing, sanitation, social welfare and police are the joint responsibility of federal and state governments. The federal government sets standards, the state governments have the responsibility for the delivery of these services. (ibid., p.2-3)

Like the US and German federations, and notwithstanding the relative stability of the Swiss canton system, it has not been able to replace or diminish the role of the federal government, especially in the area of economic redistribution.

If centralism was promoted during the last century by such mottoes as 'one law and one army', today the main considerations are the needs of the modern industrial society - economy, transportation, energy, environmental protection and communications, all of which demand supra-cantonal if not supra-national regulation." (ibid., p.3)

Because of the inequalities that exist among the cantons, a revolving fund has had to be set up to help poorer cantons. This equalising grant, and many other trends, indicate that even Switzerland has not escaped trends towards centralisation, which affect many federal systems.

**The federalism debate in South Africa**  
There is some consensus among the major

political players that a new South African constitution should involve national, regional and local government. The main areas of disagreement are:

- Whether powers and functions of regions should be listed and entrenched in the constitution;
- Whether or not to include a "repugnancy" clause in the constitution (that is, a clause that enables central government policy to prevail in case of conflict);
- Whether a clause protecting group rights should be entrenched in the constitution;
- Lastly, though not as divisive as the other points, is the important issue of the size of the regions. Some argue for smaller regions, while others would like to see bigger and fewer regions.

South Africa is, at present, a unitary state with certain federal features. The provincial councils, the TBVC states and the self-governing territories have given a federal (or even confederal) flavour to an essentially unitary system.

In the 1980s the National Party government began to centralise areas that were, in the past, decentralised. For instance, the provinces previously had elected councils. These were abolished in 1986 and replaced with administrators appointed by central government. They became administrative wings of central government ministries, albeit with powers to carry out certain functions in their own right.

The establishment of the State Security Council under PW Botha's regime also contributed to the centralisation process. The municipal police and other local security structures became centralised. Until 1987, the NP had been opposed to federalism. In short, despite the NP's call for decentralisation, the 1980s were

punctuated with moves towards centralisation of state power.

It is partly against this background that the present South African debate on federalism should be viewed.

Inkatha, the NP, the Afrikaner Volksunie (AVU) and the Democratic Party are all advocating different versions of federalism.

Inkatha proposes that existing provinces, the self-governing territories and the TBVC states should be replaced by state governments, formed according to economic, cultural and linguistic factors. They propose 9 states plus metropolitan Johannesburg as a tenth state in its own right. The IFP proposal does not differ substantially from that of the NP, both argue for strong federal regions with powers and functions listed and entrenched in the constitution.

The NP seeks to give constitutional autonomy to seven provinces. The NP also argues for original powers with respect to functions allocated to regional government. According to this proposal, the autonomous powers of the regions can only be withdrawn with the full support of the regions.

While the NP supports universal franchise, it still insists that minority rights should be protected in the constitution in order to make them majorities within regions. Like Inkatha, the NP argues that, in determining regions, account should be taken of language, culture and ethnicity. The NP, however, views economic factors as being crucial for determining the boundaries of regions.

The DP is proposing 14 federal regions, and while dealing with cultural realities, their main argument for federalism is that it "brings government closer

to the people". In the DP argument, federalism promotes accountability of political office bearers to their constituents and promotes the establishment of a democratic culture.

Predictably, the AVU goes to the other extreme of the federalist argument. They see a federal system as the route to an ethnic based Boerestaat. The proposal seems to ignore the most elementary point - there is no contiguous geographic Afrikaner land in which white Afrikaans-speakers are a majority. According AVU leader, Andries Beyers, his party has removed all vestiges of racism from its policy. In its proposed Afrikaner homeland, all "other citizens" will be accorded the same privileges. Since these "other citizens" will be in the majority, and since they will be living in a "Boer" republic, it is hard to see how they could possibly enjoy the same privileges, in any other than an extremely formalistic sense.

### **The ANC's approach**

Just as abstract arguments in favour of federalism are flawed, so abstract arguments against it are wrong. Federalism is neither inherently just or unjust. The key question is: How is democratisation and justice best facilitated in a given historical situation?

One of the first tasks in democratising our country is, clearly, to deracialise it. The ANC wants a dispensation in which people start to think of themselves politically as South Africans holding diverse views, and not as members of different racial groups (see *ANC Discussion Document on Regional Policy*, ANC dept. of Local and Regional Government and Housing and ANC Constitutional Committee, October 1992). We



need to discourage political mobilisation on the basis of race, ethnicity or language and, especially, to prevent state power at any level being used for purposes of ethnic domination.

The issue here is not what powers should be reserved for the regions and what powers for the central government. Rather, it is the relationship between central, regional and local government, in respect of the national, regional and local dimensions of the tasks that face the whole of the country, that is crucial.

The ANC believes that regions should be given adequate powers, without denying central government the right to ensure that the historical inequalities between regions, created by apartheid, are redressed. The ANC discussion document states that it will strive to do away with the massive imbalances between regions and between urban and rural areas within regions. This is predicated on the assumption that redistribution will occur at both the national and regional level to varying degrees.

To this end, the notion of "soft" regional boundaries, rather than "hard" boundaries in relation to different levels of government is posited. The ANC position in this regard can be summarised as follows:

"While we have to be rigid rather than soft on basic constitutional principles such as multi-party democracy, equality and fundamental rights and freedoms, our institutional arrangements should be as flexible as possible so as to enable them to grow and adapt themselves in the light of experience." (ibid. p.5)

The logic of this position is that the provision of services should not be prevented by hard boundaries. Similarly, the developmental responsibilities of the

different tiers of government should not be hindered by an inflexible separation of powers. For example, the ANC proposes the listing of regional government powers and functions; it recognises the need to allocate some fiscal powers to the regions; and it provides that central government should have over-riding powers in instances of policy conflict between regions and the centre. Basically, the ANC proposes concurrent powers between different levels of government, and it introduces a repugnancy clause (the right of central government to over-rule a lower tier) in the constitution.

In regard to the protection of rights, the ANC believes that the Bill of Rights should cover all civil and social rights. Therefore, there is no need to make special provision to protect the rights of minorities in the constitution. The constitution and the Bill of Rights should be one single package.

### Conclusion

International experience suggests that constitutional decentralisation (that is, federalism) does not, in itself, equal local democracy, community empowerment and control. Likewise, unitarism is not a guarantee of democracy and community participation. The issue of popular empowerment and popular control depends, amongst other things, on the actual relationship between different levels of government, irrespective of whether the system is federal or unitary.

In assessing the most favourable constitution for a country, the historical realities of that society cannot be ignored. All workable federal systems are constructed on the historical development of their societies. Federalism should not



be imposed. It has to evolve, on the basis of the objective social and economic conditions of the country.

In South Africa, there are neither historical nor objective conditions to justify the arguments for an ethnic or minority-based federalism. All the reasonable arguments advanced for federalism, like the need to bring government closer to the people, can, in our concrete circumstances, be better met under a unitary system.

However, that is not to deny that, in the present debate, many proponents of unitarism have also lost objectivity in

their criticism of federalism. The whole debate has tended to be polarised around the form, rather than the content of the system.

I believe that the ANC position is correct. A unitary system, but with a significant degree of decentralisation, with "soft" regional boundaries to accommodate the major national tasks before us, and to accommodate our extremely fluid situation, best meets our historical realities and our future challenges.

But, of course, at the end of the day, the content of our democracy is more important than its constitutional form. ★

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## THE TENTH REGION:

# How viable is it?



By Govan Mbeki ■

I do not propose here to examine the need to demarcate South Africa into regions. This I take as given. Originally, nine regions were proposed. The Constitutional Committee of the ANC has, however, proposed a tenth region, consisting of the Transkei, Border (that is East London and environs), the Ciskei and East Griqualand.

In regard to "East Griqualand", it should be noted that, until the division of what were formerly known as natives' reserves into bantustans, East Griqualand, except for the Mount Currie District (Kokstad) was part of the Transkei. The inclusion of East Griqualand in this proposed tenth region gives the impression that there is a new area, other than Kokstad, that is now being added to this region.

The only justification given by the proponents of this tenth region is: "The overwhelming majority of inhabitants speak Xhosa, while English and Afrikaans are widely spoken. The area around East London provides an industrial base."

Was the ANC Constitution Committee really influenced in its recommendation by the fact that the people of this

proposed tenth region are overwhelmingly Xhosa-speaking? This type of thinking is surely not what would be expected of an ANC organ. It coincides with the way National Party planners thought in the setting up of the bantustans – that is, that Xhosa-speaking people were a cultural group of their own.

Since I do not accept that the ANC Constitution Committee was influenced in its decision by ethnic considerations, let us examine the second consideration, namely that "the area around East London provides an industrial base."

According to statistical information the population of this region is:

Region	Population (Millions)	Gross Geographi- cal Product per Capita
Border (EL)	0,6	R6 120
Ciskei	0,8	R1 610
Transkei	3,1	R 937

The figures above show that the population of the area is 4,5 million. Allowing for natural growth it may well be 5 million by now.

In developing the idea of bantustans, Dr HF Verwoerd designated the Border areas (East London, Kingwilliamstown, Berlin and Queenstown) for border industrial development. In other words, this area was designated as an area for the location of capital intensive industry requiring African labour from an adjoining bantustan. This gave rise to the dormitory township of Mdantsane, outside the "white" Border territory.

Also in terms of the bantustan policy, other industrial establishments were to be located within the bantustans themselves. A series of incentives were granted by the government to induce industry to locate in those areas. These incentives included a ban on trade union activity. In the Ciskei there were also tax incentives.

The result was that, while major industries remained in the established industrial areas, there was some extension into the border areas in order to comply with the requirements of the Physical Planning Act. There was also some highly exploitative Taiwanese-owned industries established in these areas.

Let us examine what this bantustan-linked "industrial base" around East London, as well as the Border ("white area") and the Transkei entails:

### **Ciskei 1979**

56 factories employing 5,516

**1990**

203 factories employing 28,868

**1992**

176 factories employing 19,248

### **Border 1979**

37,171 factory employees  
("white areas")

**1985**

36,644 factory employees

**1990**

35,000 factory employees

### **Transkei 1985**

82 factories

**1989**

115 factories

**1990**

107 factories employing 16,101

These figures indicate that the total employed in 1990 in the proposed tenth region was 70,349 workers.

These figures also show that, although there was a rise in the number of factories in the Ciskei from 1979 to 1990, the Ciskei experienced a sharp decline thereafter, both in the number of factories and workers employed. According to Lulu Ntshinga and Paul Daphne: "The boom in industrial employment (and number of factories) in the Ciskei was accompanied by stagnation in those border industrial points outside the Ciskei boundary." The figures also suggest a decline in the Transkei as well.

The situation, then, is that the number of factories in the proposed region has been declining over the last five years. So has the number of people employed in "the industrial base" around East London. The total number of people employed in the manufacturing sector in this region (70,349) must be measured against a total regional population of 5 million, and a total, estimated economically-active figure of 1,7 million.

The claim that there is a viable industrial base for the region around East



London, simply does not stand up to scrutiny.

### **An alternative?**

What then would be an alternative? This tenth region falls between two major industrial areas – Durban and Port Elizabeth. It would make sense from an economic point of view for the districts in Eastern Pondoland, Mt Aylif, Mt Frere, Mount Fletcher, Matatiele, Kokstad and Mzimkulu to fall in the Natal region, with Durban as the industrial base.

The other districts of the Transkei, from Qumbu and Western Pondoland through to the Border and Ciskei, would fall under the Eastern Cape region, with Port Elizabeth as the industrial base.

The demarcation proposed above would, however, likely draw serious objections from those who would like to see the Transkei remain a unit for administrative reasons.

- In this regard, we need to bear in mind the current discussions in the negotiations process around where power will

be located. Is it going to be in the central government or in the regions? There is a strong feeling that the devolution of power from the centre to the regions should see the regions being more independent. The implication of this would be that regions would take decisions on a wide number of matters relating to the regions. And the further implication would be that a region would be responsible for providing most of the financial resources for itself.

If a strong devolution of power is effected to the regions, then it would be ever more important that rural areas, such as the proposed tenth region, should be attached to an industrial base or bases which can generate income.

If, however, power is located more firmly at the centre, then, in principle, the problem with the tenth region would be less serious. In theory, at least, a strong, democratic central government would spread scarce resources justly and equitably amongst all regions. ★

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INTERNATIONAL

Government, civil society and democracy

# THE CUBAN EXPERIENCE

by Carlos A Mas Zabala

*Both the crisis of democracy in contemporary capitalist society, and the collapse of east European socialism, underline the importance of a Gramscian analysis of post-industrial societies. These crises reaffirm the importance of civil society as a terrain for the expression of popular will. Faced with massive state apparatuses, in which the management of society has turned into a technocratic profession of the "elected", the challenge of developing and strengthening popular power in civil society has emerged as a central issue of our time.*

*In this context, a brief description of Cuban society provides interesting angles to carry discussion forward. One of the main virtues of Cuban society is its system of mass and social organisations, and the interaction of civil society with state structures. The Cuban example helps us to enter the debate, not from theoretical suppositions, but from the practical experience that has enabled us to survive pressures, blockades and aggression for over thirty years, thanks, mainly, to the unity of the people around their revolution.*



### CUBAN EXPERIENCE

In Cuba a set of historical specifics has determined a particular balance of forces. The distinctive feature of this balance is the socialist character of the ownership of the means of production, and the existence of a single party. Both of these factors have facilitated a powerful movement of social and mass organisations, through which civil society assumes an active role in the destiny of the country.

The formation of powerful mass organisations in Cuba actually took place before the Cuban Communist Party was founded. Their recognition of the party as a leading force in our society was something the party had to earn through providing real leadership. But this recognition does not mean that the party and the mass organisations are identical.

Each of our mass organisations is independent, has its own system of elections, and its own tasks and interests, which correspond to the sector of the population which each formation seeks to organise.

The Federation of Cuban Workers (CTC) is a trade union confederation. It unites almost all manual and intellectual workers. Each of its affiliates is organised according to industrial and branch interests.

In residential areas, the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution (CDRs) are active. They were formed to protect

popular interests from counter-revolutionary sabotage and vandalism. They have developed into a powerful force, and play an important role in the electoral process, in neighbourhood health and clean-up campaigns, and in support of educational institutions.

The Federation of Cuban Women (FMC), also organised on a residential basis, takes charge of the defence and protection of the interests of its members. It promotes health campaigns, gives support to families and to the disabled, promotes the incorporation of women into the work force, and fights to facilitate this process.

In the rural areas, there is the National Association of Small Farmers (ANAP). This formation groups together peasants, who own some 10% of arable land in Cuba. It promotes co-operative projects among its members, seeing in these projects a higher form of productivity. But it is careful to promote these projects as strictly voluntary.

Both secondary and tertiary education students have their own Federations. At the primary school level, there is the Jose Marti Pioneers Organisation. Primary school students elect their own leaders and set specific tasks for their organisation, appropriate to the age of their members.

Besides these mass formations, there is a whole array of social organisations, uniting, variously, writers and artists,



***Mass organisations in Cuba are independent and have their own system of elections, tasks and interests***



journalists, lawyers, economists, engineers, doctors, teachers and lecturers, and various other organisations of scientists and inventors, etc.

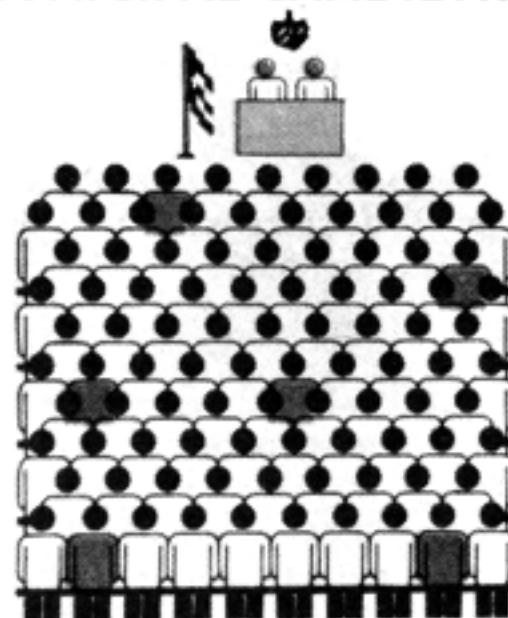
### The Cuban Electoral System

The first characteristic of the Cuban electoral system, its most significant difference with bourgeois electoral systems, is the process of nomination of candidates. The nomination process, in the first place for the municipal level, is done in the midst of the community itself, without any party intervention. The people, organised in community meetings, are absolutely free to propose and motivate candidates of their own choice. The elections are then, subsequently, conducted through secret and direct ballot. Cuban elections are characterised by a very high popular turn-out at the polling stations.

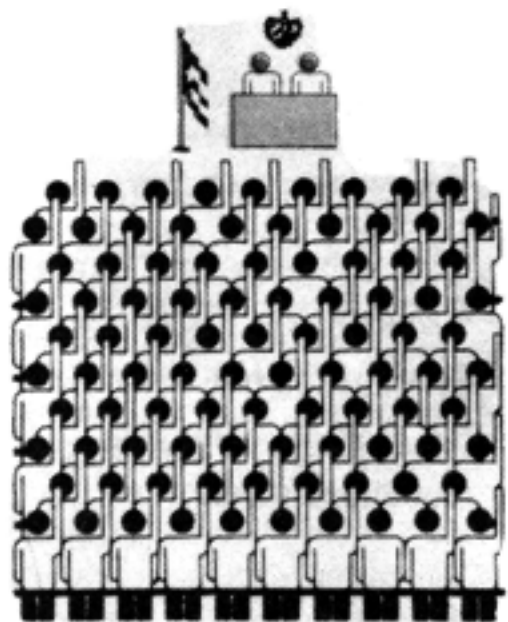
Being elected as a delegate does not confer any special privileges on a citizen. The only privilege is the responsibility of representing the aspirations of one's constituency in various state bodies. An elected municipal delegate has to set aside one day a week for meeting with those voters in his/her election district who want a meeting, or who have written with problems requiring answers. Delegates also have to hold two annual report-back meetings. Delegates remain in their places of work and residence, in the very areas in which they were elected.

Once elected, delegates constitute the base of the Cuban state structure, being integrated into the municipal structures of people's power. These municipal assemblies elect from their midst the main municipal government figures, and they vet the various administrative appointments that fall under their jurisdiction.

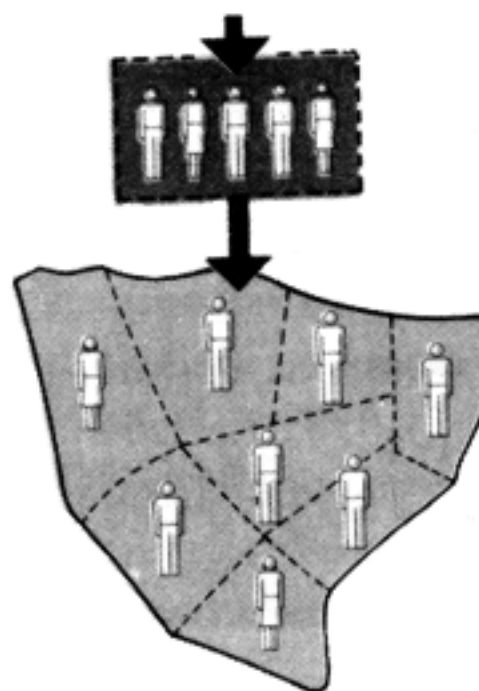
#### NOMINATIONS OF MUNICIPAL CANDIDATES



*A meeting of residents in the nominations area is held in which candidates are proposed. A chairperson and secretary are elected for the meeting*



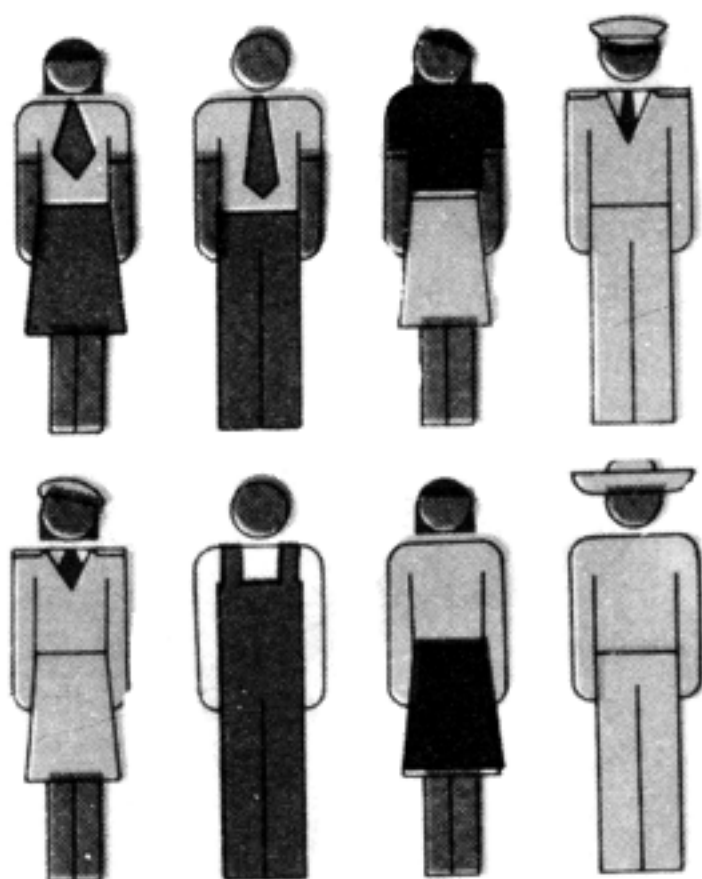
*The residents vote on the candidate who are proposed. The one with the most votes is declared nominated.*



*The nominee is then inscribed as candidate for the election district*

#### ELECTION DISTRICT

### THE RIGHT TO VOTE



***All Cuban citizens 16 years or over have the right to vote. Those of 16 can also be elected to the Municipal and Provincial Assemblies. Deputies for the National Assembly must be at least 18 years old.***

The law ensures that, if necessary, delegates have facilities in their regular places of work, to exercise their state functions. Only those who are eventually elected to government posts, as such, proceed to carry them out on a full-time basis.

Elections for the provincial and national assemblies add further distinctive features to the Cuban electoral system. In terms of the Cuban constitution, both provincial assemblies and the national assembly must have at least a 50% majority of delegates elected, in the first place, in the municipal primaries. This guarantees a greater spread of territorial representation, and that the grass-roots, popular nominations process prevails at

the higher levels as well.

The continued presence of a majority of national and provincial assembly delegates **in their** communities gives our organs of state power an eminently popular character. The majority of delegates continue to stay in their communities and they continue to work in their regular places of work.

Secondly, every endeavour is made to strengthen the role of mass sectoral formations in state structures. The remainder of candidates for provincial and national assemblies (in other words, those not elected directly at the municipal level), are selected by and subject to popular vote by Candidates Commissions. These commissions are chaired by a representative of the CTC (the Federation of Cuban Trade Unions), and they also have representatives from the Federation of Cuban Women, the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution, the National Association of Small Farmers, the Union of Young Communists, and the Federation of Students.

The secretary general of the Union of Young Communists, the president of the Federation of Cuban Women, the president of the Committees for the Defence of the Revolution and the president of the Association of Small Farmers are all automatically members of the Council of State.

Social and mass organisations also participate directly in the various State Management Councils relevant to their sector (agriculture, health, education, etc.). They participate in the main decision-making, especially where an issue has implications for their members.

### **The Communist Party**

From the Cuban Communist Party's



perspective, the social and mass organisations are important centres from which it is able to inform itself on the pulse, aspirations and concerns of society as a whole.

The party's principal role is to attempt to unite the interests of society, without subverting different interests specific to different regions and social sectors.

Millions of our people took part in the policy debate before the fourth Party Congress, in tens of thousands of meetings. More than a million proposals, additions and amendments were suggested. Popular participation is central to the party's policy formation.

The party is deeply integrated into all sectors and spheres of Cuban society. Its

main site of organisation is the workplace, but it also organises in the army and in residential areas. It demands exemplary conduct from its members. Through its close ties with ordinary citizens, the Cuban Communist Party has won prestige and authority.

In the context of a socialist economy and a Communist Party rooted among the people, Cuban society has developed a network of independent mass and social formations and of elected governmental bodies in which every effort is made to ensure that delegates do not become an elite separate from the people. It is this unique combination that provides the Cuban Revolution with its great popular strength. ★

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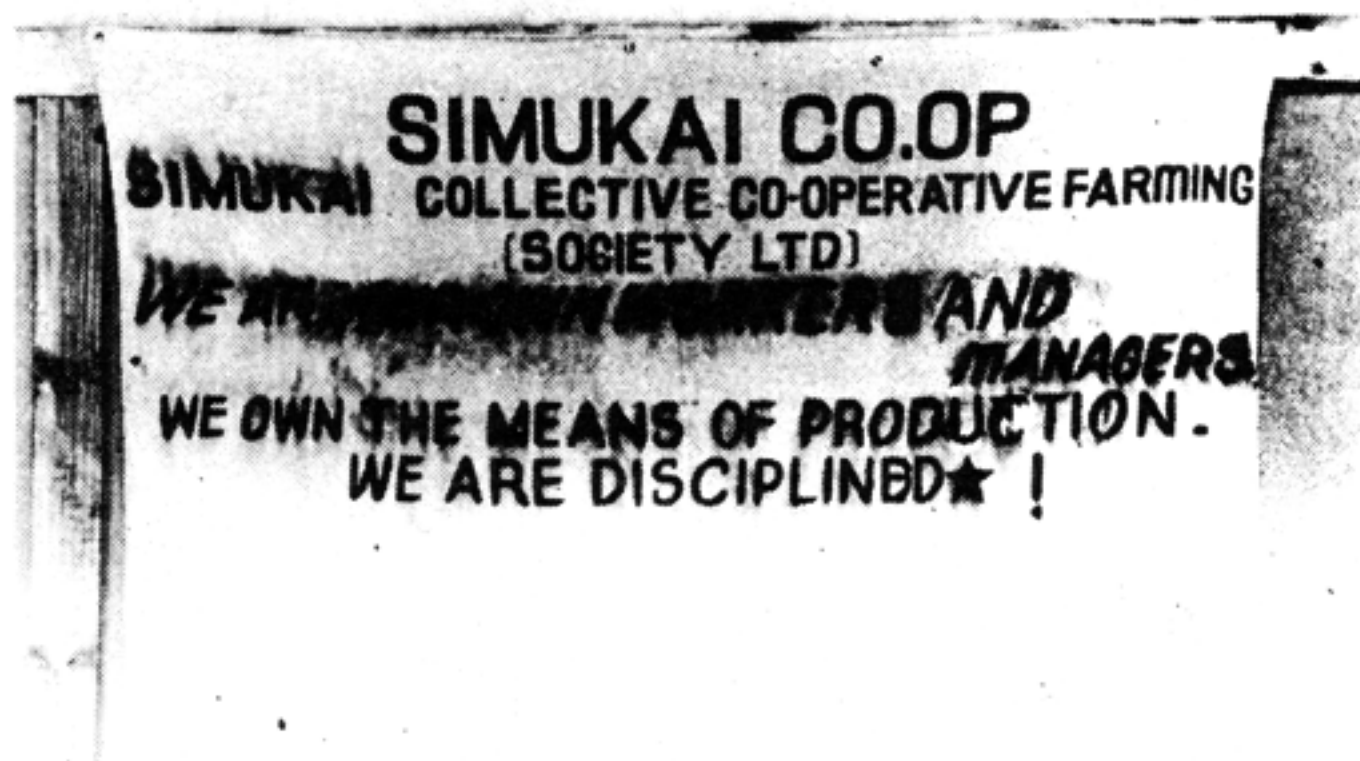
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**A banner of the  
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**SIMUKAI MEANS 'ARISE!':**

# **Soviet drama and a Zimbabwean Co-operative**

**by Robert Mshengu Kavanagh**

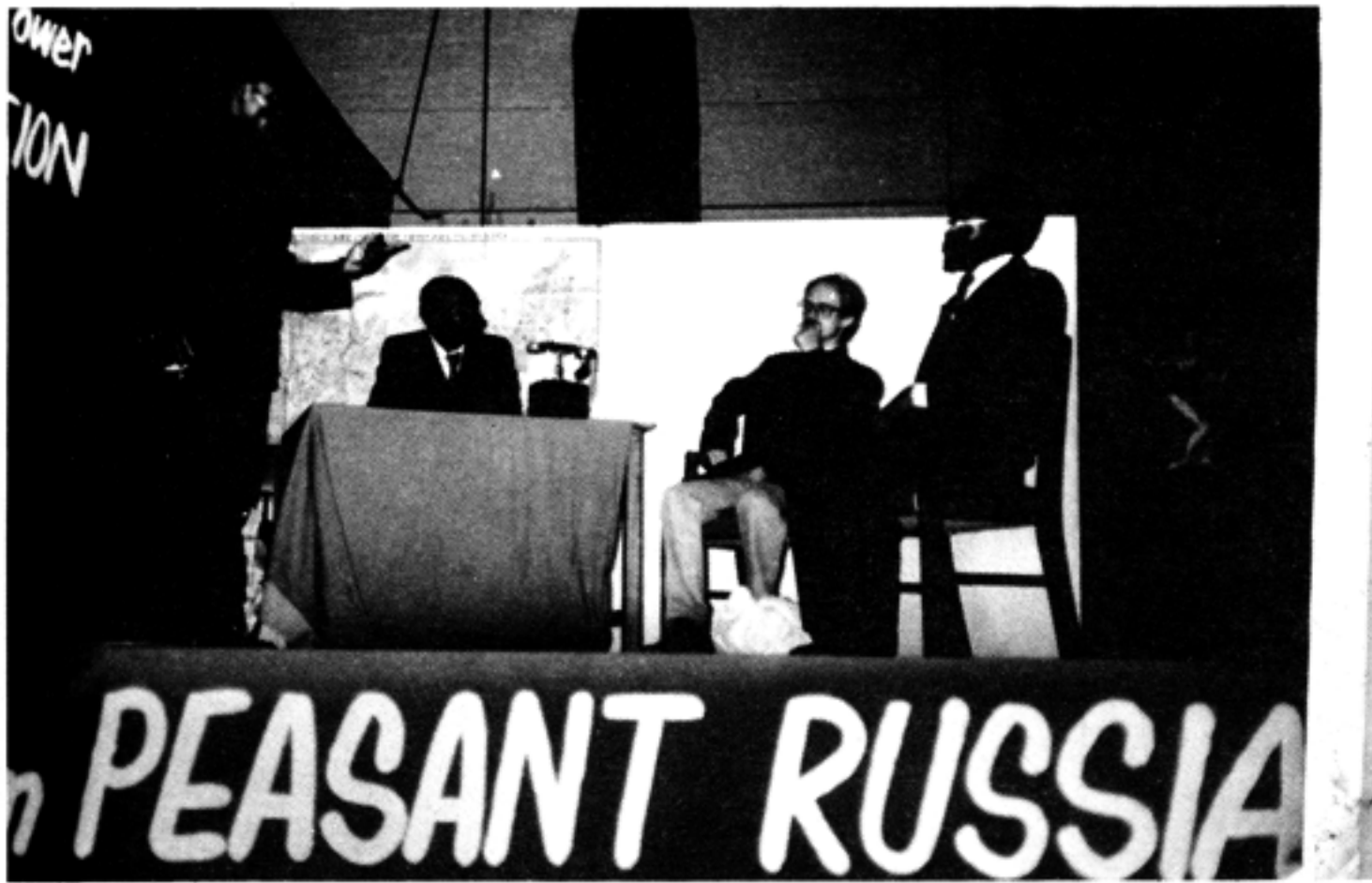
**A**fter the war of independence in Zimbabwe was over, thousands of freedom-fighters from the two guerrilla armies of ZANLA and ZIPRA were demobilised. Some were absorbed into the army, the police and government. The vast majority were paid off and left to fend for themselves. They were encouraged to use their demob payout to form co-operatives.

Simukai is a co-operative farm about 40 kilometres to the south of Harare. It was formed by former ZIPRA combatants, who bought a farm in the commercial farming area (i.e. previously reserved for whites) and, struggling against fierce opposition and sabotage, managed to extend their land and found a successful co-

---

*Robert Mshengu Kavanagh was born in South Africa and is presently a senior lecturer in drama at the University of Zimbabwe. He co-founded the theatre organisation, Workshop '71, in Johannesburg and the theatre magazine, S'ketsh! He taught drama at Addis Ababa University in 1980-4, before taking up his present post.*





Scene from the drama: *Kremlin Chimes...* discussing the electrification of Russia (Lenin in centre)

operative producing a variety of crops, including tobacco, wheat and maize, as well as beef, pork and recently fish.

In the early days Simukai faced open hostility from surrounding white farmers and organised sabotage from the Agricultural Finance Corporation, being forced on one occasion to bid at public auction for the farm they had already purchased, and pay for it in cash. By 1987 cde Andrew Nyathi, Simukai's chairperson, could boast without fear of contradiction that there was no privately owned farm in the area that produced better tobacco, beef and pork than the Simukai co-operative farm. The co-operative had gone a long way to eliminating sexual discrimination in the work place, developed a creche for members' children, a communal mess and a school. As Nyathi pointed out, these are the new children, born and brought up in a co-operative environment and their education should not develop in contradiction with this. (For an account of the struggle to establish Simukai, see A Nyathi, *Tomorrow is Built Today*, Anvil Press,

Harare, 1990).

### **Moscow comes to Simukai**

A few days before the 71st anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution the members of the co-operative watched a performance of N Pogodin's *Kremlin Chimes* in the communal mess. The performance crystallised visually and symbolically the struggle for a new Zimbabwe in which Simukai, meaning 'Arise', echoing the first word of the Internationale in its name, is of the vanguard.

The walls of the mess are hung with posters, including pictures of Lenin, Samora Machel, Mandela and posters from the trade union movement and the anti-apartheid struggle. For the performance one large red banner spans the upstage wall, reading: "All Power to the Soviets!". Another to one side proclaims: "Socialism means Soviet Power Plus Electrification". Another reads "From Peasant Russia to Industrial Russia". This is Russia in the bitter years of the Civil War when, at a time of invasion, starva-

tion and chaos, Lenin and the Bolsheviks launched Gosplan, the electrification of the Soviet Union, a project for which the English science fiction writer, HG Wells, dubbed Lenin "the dreamer in the Kremlin".

At the other end of the mess, sitting on rough benches, the co-operative members and their children gaze at the scene before them. The only socket in the building, which on other nights powers a television set on whose screen the members watch *Dynasty* and other American soap operas or programmes often quite openly hostile to socialism and socialist countries, tonight powers three 500 watt theatre spotlights, casting evocative shadows across the scene, a tape recorder and a slide projector. While the actors change into their costumes in a van parked just outside the only door into the building, the performance is introduced with slides showing the situation at that time in Russia, taken from drawings in Progress Publishers comic-strip depiction of the revolution entitled *The Russian Revolution: What Actually Happened*.

Then an old woman enters, swathed in a ragged scarf, cloak and dress of grey and black. Advancing to the audience she croaks: "Dobree vyechir, dobreeya ludya". Russian for "Good evening, good people". Then persisting in Russian, she asks the people if they wish to buy a doll. The audience can see the doll but not understand the woman's speech. However with the sound of the Komsomol Youth singing an old revolutionary song softly in the background, they are transported back seventy years and thousands of miles across the seas to old Moscow during the Civil War.

"Thenganin'idoll, bantu bahle.



**Love across the class line ...  
Bolshevik sailor, Rybakov proposing marriage to electrical engineer Zabilin' daughter, Masha**

Ngilamadoll amahle sibili. Khangelani!" (Buy a doll, good people. I have very nice dolls. Look!) Now she speaks Ndebele and the audience, lost in Moscow, immediately finds its way. Soon the stage fills with similarly ragged and desperate people selling useless luxuries for food, or food at exorbitant prices, a priest hawking gold crosses and finally Zabelin, the great electrical engineer, himself, peddling matches!

In the next scene they see a young man in sailor's uniform who had locked a young lady in his room until she agrees to give him an answer to the question he has asked her over and over — will she be



his wife? The co-operative workers enjoy this. It is a universal situation. And the mother-in-law, Masha's mother, who enters next, makes everyone feel even more at home as she criticises the untidiness of the room belonging to the *mukwasha* (son-in-law in Shona), and then embarrasses her daughter by revealing that Masha has already mentioned her intention to marry Rybakov, the young man. It appears mothers and mothers-in-law are much the same everywhere. It has not taken long to attract the sympathy of ordinary people for Rybakov in his relationship with the classy Masha and then later in his confrontation with the petit-bourgeois snobs of Zabelin's circle.

But one of the most dramatic moments comes in the next scene when Lenin enters and engages in light-hearted banter with the peasant Chudnov's little children, who refuse to believe that he is "the real Lenin", until he takes off his cap, that is, and the famous bald head puts the dispute beyond doubt. The picture of the real Lenin is on the wall in the Simukai mess and here is another Lenin on stage, moving and talking and looking for all the world like the Lenin on the wall, the only difference being that this Lenin the co-operative workers are watching is black!

Who are these actors, where are they from and how do they happen to be performing a Soviet play at a small co-operative farm in the African countryside?

## A Zimbabwean proletkult

*Kremlin Chimes* was first produced in Zimbabwe in 1987, the year of the 70th anniversary of the Great October Socialist Revolution. It made African theatre his-

tory when Todd Winini, a laboratory technician at the University of Zimbabwe Medical School, became the first African actor to act the role of Lenin. As a result photographs, posters and programmes of the production were put on display in the Museum of the Revolution in Leningrad and extracts broadcast on Soviet television. In this way the Soviet public learnt that Lenin belongs to socialists everywhere, irrespective of race, colour or nation.

Charles Tongoono Madzudzo, who captured brilliantly the pomposity and martyred affectation of Engineer Zabelin, was an apprentice printer with Cellophane Packaging Industries. Sam Kugara, the audiences' darling as Rybakov, the Bolshevik sailor, and Anna Kapeta, Zabelin's daughter, were unemployed young people from the Harare working class suburb of Mabvuku. Tisa Chifunyise, Zabelin's wife, was editor of *Teacher's Forum*, Phebion Muronzi, Kazanok and the Sceptic, was a journalist, as was David Munaka (The Optimist). Siphiwe Takura (Frightened Woman) and Philip Weiss (Glagolev) were teachers. Robert Maclaren, who played the British Author, was a lecturer in drama at the University of Zimbabwe. The rest were unemployed youth, school and university students.

Thus *Kremlin Chimes* was an authentic proletkult production, which for its cast meant months of rehearsal after work, late nights, transport difficulties after rehearsals, struggling with an English script, learning Russian phrases and internalising a world that, at first sight, seemed remote and foreign.

There were many reasons for choosing this play, a classic of Soviet socialist realism. But the main reason is its perti-

nence for socialists in our region. It depicts the struggle to transform a backward, feudo-bourgeois economy into developed socialism through the electrification programme. Bringing power to the villages is a real challenge for Zimbabwe, which already has the Hwange and Kariba thermal and hydro electric power stations. Because of colonialism this power was developed to service the white residential, industrial and farming regions alone, leaving the vast majority of the population without any electricity.

The play stresses the important role of professionals in the economic struggle. As Lenin is made to say to the engineer, Zabelin: "We want you to work and to work good and hard. That will be the best Marxism – both for you and us." (*Kremlin Chimes*, in *Classic Soviet Plays*, Progress Publishers, Moscow, 1979, p.433). In Zimbabwe almost all technicians and professionals before independence were white. After independence many of them left the country, the majority going to racist South Africa. Those who remained often withdrew their co-operation, just as did Zabelin, and set themselves up in the private sector. For example, many white doctors and surgeons left the public hospitals and opened private clinics. Black professionals, trained for the most part in Western countries, also did not readily associate themselves with the socialist goals proclaimed by the government. In *Kremlin Chimes*, Zabelin, the famous engineer, is peddling matches:

**Zabelin:** ...The new society has no

need for me because my job is building power plants and they, my dear sir, are now being closed down. I am unemployed. We've no thought to spare for electricity now. Ox team is replacing electric power. And I, like Prometheus, am providing people with fire. From morning till night I stand by the Iberian Gates selling matches." (p.401)

Similarly, the play showed that there was a place in socialist development for the skilled craftsman, the clockmaker, who in the play is expelled from his co-

operative workshop for spending too long on getting sophisticated old time-pieces to work again and for telling his fellow workers one of Aesop's fables which demonstrates the moral that "quality is better than quantity." They accuse Aesop of being "a counter-revolutionary and an agent of the Entente"!

He is enlisted by Lenin to repair the Kremlin Chimes on Spasskaya Tower, which had fallen silent and become a symbol in the eyes of the likes of Zabelin and his cronies for the collapse of "civilisation" under the Bolsheviks. Not only does he repair it but he teaches it to play the Internationale, thus chiming in a new day, a new world, in Russia.

The battle for socialism in the Soviet Union was bedevilled by invasion, banditry, destabilisation and counter-revolutionary sabotage. The hunger, shortages and social chaos depicted in the play can only be compared with the fate of present-day Mozambique, where the

**The battle for socialism in the Soviet Union was bedevilled by invasion, banditry, destabilisation and counter-revolutionary sabotage.**



Frelimo government also attempted to build "a nova sociedade", a socialist Mozambique. South Africa, however, as proxy for imperialism had other ideas and sowed death and destruction throughout Mozambique through direct raids and the use of the poisonous legacy of Smith's Rhodesian state, the so-called MNR or Renamo bandits.

In the quest to understand and internalise the situation in Moscow in those years, the Zimbabwean revolutionary example provided the actors with a constantly useful point of reference. In improvisatory work the petit-bourgeois Zabelin circle was seen as the equivalent of the white Rhodesians at the time of independence, arrogant but nervous of what the future held in store for them as "uncivilised" sections of society, "the dark forces", took control of the state. This parallel actually emerges clearly in Pogodin's script as Zabelin likens the Bolsheviks to "savages" and the overthrown ruling class to "white men" when he says:

"Savages have seized a civilised ship, killed off the white men, thrown the crew overboard, devoured all the ship's stores...But the question is, what next? One has to know how to pilot a ship, and they don't know. They've promised socialism, but how to even begin to go about it no one knows."  
(p.399)

For the Zimbabwean actors and audiences this association crystallised in the quite fortuitous coincidence that the word used to describe the counter-revolutionary forces in the Civil War was "whites"!

None of these meanings and messages were lost to the dark figures who watched the play unfold inside the raw

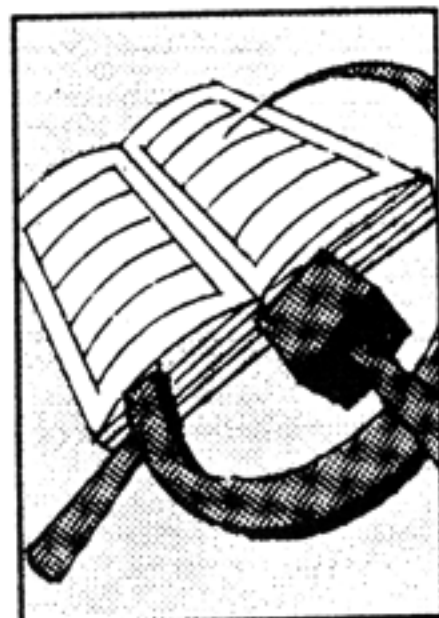
brick and rough beams of their strangely transformed co-operative farm mess. They themselves had fought a desperate battle (and were still fighting) to build a small piece in the great jigsaw of a socialist Zimbabwe.

As capitalism, rampant and unopposed, restructures the economies of Africa to suit its selfish needs, the ordinary people face a rapidly, frighteningly, deteriorating situation. Not only do shortages of food, goods, jobs, transport and accommodation show no signs of being alleviated but the price of what is available multiplies by the day. At the moment, Lenin and his ideals have fallen on hard times in the land of his birth. The Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, established by the world's first great workers' revolution, has collapsed and everywhere the media proclaims, as if it were a truism, that the ideology of socialism is "discredited".

"Simuka" means "Arise!", "Arise, ye prisoners of starvation, arise ye wretched of the earth!" In Zimbabwe, in Africa and in the other countries of the so-called Third World, the chains multiply and the misery intensifies. That performance of the classic Soviet play, *Kremlin Chimes*, showed the importance of the Great October Revolution and the leadership and ideas of Lenin to ordinary Zimbabweans like those at Simukai in the first ten years after independence. The experience of the next ten might well make that leadership and those ideas not just important, but a matter of life and death. ★

# Erich Honecker Cross-examined

by Reinhold Andert and Wolfgang Herzber,  
Pleckbond, London.



BOOK REVIEW

*reviewed by Brian Bunting*

This book, published in 1992, is a translation of an interview conducted by the two authors. The interview took place between February and May 1990, a few months after Honecker was ousted as general secretary of the Socialist Unity Party (SED) of the German Democratic Republic. After the book was published, Honecker was subjected to an extraordinary ordeal of persecution, harassment and ultimately arrest by a Federal German government intent on punishing him as the alleged instigator of the "shoot to kill" order to GDR border guards, responsible for the deaths of refugees trying to escape over the Berlin Wall.

Fearing a rigged trial, aimed at discrediting communism, Honecker sought refuge in Moscow, but was extradited and brought before a court in Berlin from which he was eventually released, on the grounds of ill-health. He is, at present, living with his children in Chile, broken in health but certainly not in spirit or conviction.

In an introduction to the English edition to this book, the British communist, Maurice Levitas, makes the interesting comment that the psychologi-

cal element played an important role in the interview: *"After all Honecker was – and still is – experiencing shock and intense inner turmoil. In spite of the searching questions, he therefore found a certain relief in this interview according to his questioners."*

In one respect Honecker could not speak his mind as freely as he might have wished. Honecker believes that his overthrow as party and state leader was *"the outcome of a vast, well-prepared manoeuvre whose wire-pullers still remain in the background"*. Some of them were his comrades in the SED, who took over the reins from him and whom he openly criticises. But also involved in the conspiracy, he hints, were the leaders of the CPSU, then headed by Gorbachev, who had been unavailingly pressing him to "reform". As a disciplined communist, still anxious to defend the ramparts of international communism against imperialist attack, he could never allow himself to engage in a polemic against Gorbachev. Nevertheless, he murmurs.

Asked: *"How do you feel – in view of your own overthrow – about the downfall of the GDR, or even the entire social-*



ist order – to whose construction you devoted your life?”, Honecker replies: “Obviously a whole world has collapsed for me.” And not only for him, but for all the comrades who had worked so hard for 40 years for the establishment of a socialist society. Nevertheless, he insists time and again through this remarkable interview, that, in spite of all the setbacks of the recent period, socialism will emerge triumphant because it is the only alternative to capitalism.

The achievements of 40 years of struggle may be liquidated, but their memory will not be dissolved. Apart from anything else, the loss of social security and shelter, full employment, a secure future for children, the equal status of men and women, and many other features of socialism in the GDR would not disappear from memory. And the sheer logic of the class struggle would compel people in all countries once more to undertake the establishment of a socialist society.

*“Whatever one likes to call it, it will be a society without the exploitation of man by man, which in the scientific sense must be described as a socialist society. I am deeply convinced that Marxism will experience a revival, because the concentration of capital in one hand compels the working classes, especially their trade unions, to lead a struggle for the social improvement of the people.”*

Honecker is not unconscious of the fact that he has a case to answer for in the collapse of socialism in the GDR. “Did socialism have faults?”, he asks. “Did we, did I, make mistakes? I certainly did. But who gives anyone the right to insist that capitalism has none? It has made more than enough. I don’t need to enumerate them to you. More and more

*people see that. Its two-thirds society has no future.”*

Honecker insists that the Socialist Unity Party was well aware of its shortcomings, and that at the very meeting of the political bureau on October 7, 1989, at which he was confronted with the demand for his resignation as general secretary, he had intended coming forward with a programme of reform, which would democratise the party and society as a whole. After the opening of the border in Hungary and the complicity of Czechoslovakia in facilitating the exodus of GDR citizens to the west, it was obvious that a new course had to be taken. But he was unwilling to throw out the baby with the bathwater and to negate all the positive achievements of socialism in the GDR.

Events had made it clear that the Socialist Unity Party had lost the support of the masses, and though Honecker was confident that he could preside over the process of change, the members of the political bureau felt that he was so closely associated with the errors of the past era that he could no longer retain credibility as leader of the party. His sacking and later arrest came as a tremendous shock to him. He felt betrayed.

Asked what he thought of the Gorbachev reform programme in the Soviet Union, associated with the terms perestroika and glasnost, Honecker replies: *“We supported the restructuring process in the Soviet Union, and the higher tempo under the leadership of general secretary Mikhail Gorbachev, fully and completely... We wished him great success because we knew that a rise of socialist living standards in the Soviet Union meant a further strengthening of socialism, and a widening of the*

*capacity of the progressive forces in the world."*

However, Honecker felt that there was no need for the GDR to copy the Soviet Union. For one thing, its food problem had been solved, and it even exported meat and butter. There was not the same urgency. In addition, the conditions for building socialism in the GDR were different from the Soviet Union. Perestroika and glasnost had not markedly improved the conditions of the Soviet people, and the GDR was reluctant to follow a course which had not shown itself to be effective. Politically, the weakening of democratic centralism in the Soviet Union and the advocacy of pluralism had led to great confusion, and the economy floundered. Above all, Gorbachev's foreign policy may have improved relations with the West, but it undermined the unity of the socialist countries.

When the crisis came in the GDR and the masses of Leipzig were out on the streets, Honecker insists that he never considered the *"Chinese option"*, the resort to force. *"We always set out from the view that socialism will be carried by the masses...I have never thought about violence or repression of demonstrations. The orders which I issued were not orders of my own or isolated decisions. We were determined to solve all questions which were concentrated during the October and November days by means of dialogue, partnership and security."*

The failure of the Socialist Unity Party to carry the day was not due either to the reluctance to use force, or to the volume of the shouts in the market square in Leipzig, but to *"the incompetence of the central leadership (after his departure) to proceed further along the socialist*

*road."*

Questioned about the main charge against him – that he was responsible for the order to shoot GDR citizens who attempted to escape by climbing over the Berlin Wall – Honecker insists that the GDR regulations relating to border control were no different from those in force in other countries. The Federal Republic of Germany also had border control regulations, which he had discussed with Strauss and other FRG leaders. They told him that suspects were ordered to stand still and if they did not stand still a warning shot followed. *"That was the same as with our police in the GDR."* Because of the international campaign against the so-called *"order to shoot"*, GDR police were eventually ordered to stop firing warning shots and only use their weapons in self-defence.

Honecker is asked by his questioners: *"Are you not sorry about the two hundred people who were killed on the Wall?"* He replies: *"I am sorry for our twenty-five comrades who were treacherously murdered on the border. Requests from us to the government of the Federal Republic at the time, to extradite these people, were answered negatively."*

**"Question:** Was it clear to you that, for many people, the Wall was a declaration of the moral bankruptcy of socialism, because otherwise it could not keep its people?

**"Answer:** What does 'for many people' mean? The establishment of the front here at the time of the Cold War was a necessity. We stopped the bloodletting of the GDR that way. One really had to stand by the decision of the members of the Warsaw Pact. It was in the interest of peace, security and socialist



construction."

Honecker is closely questioned about his relations with and attitude towards Stalin. His first reply is unrevealing:

*"Q: What do you think of Stalin today?"*

*"A: I did not know him personally and never had a conversation with him."*

*"Q: That lets you out nicely!"*

Honecker insists: *"We strove for socialist ideas without ever having heard anything about Stalin."* He is correct to insist on the indigenous nature of socialism in Germany, where communists had been active before the Russian revolution and before Stalin was heard of. But later on, the GDR, along with many others, acknowledged the leading role of the Soviet Union in the world-wide struggle against imperialism and for socialism. And at the head of the Soviet Union stood Stalin, under whose leadership the Soviet Union had been converted from a backward feudal state into a super-power. Then came the 20th Congress of the CPSU in 1956 – *"we were all deeply shocked by the distortions of the socialist system that were revealed."* Honecker tore down the portrait of Stalin on the wall of his Berlin office, but later regretted it *"because one cannot take him out of history... We said this is bad, but the revolution must proceed."*

One of six children, Honecker grew up in a miner's family, where class consciousness was almost self-generated and communist ideas flourished. Leaving school at 14, he worked first as a farm labourer and then as a roofer, but he did not complete his apprenticeship. Instead, as a reward for his work in the Communist Youth League, he was sent to the Comintern school in Moscow.

*"Q: Can you remember your first*

*girlfriend?"*

*"A: I cannot really recollect. I was, so to speak, a late sinner in that sphere. What interested me was political life and my first love was actually in the Soviet Union."*

Politics, communist politics, became his ruling passion to which he devoted himself with extraordinary dedication and concentration, bordering on zealotry. On the one hand, this led to a certain rigidity in his approach to controversial issues. On the other hand, it gave him the toughness and resilience to withstand the pressures of both Hitler's gaolers and, after the war, high office in the state. He never doubted that his cause was right. Ever combative, he is reluctant to make confessions or concessions which reflect badly on the communist movement or be interpreted as a sign of weakness.

He does admit, however, that in the sphere of state security, the telephone tapping and spying on private citizens, things got out of hand. He was astonished to discover how vast the Ministry of State Security had grown during his tenure of office. He had thought there might be 35,000 people on the payroll, but learnt that there were 85,000 full-timers, with a further 100,000 "volunteers". *"To develop such a widespread system, as is now made obvious, contradicted all the decisions of the Politbureau as well as of the National Defence Council which did honourable work, and is only to be explained thus: that an attempt was made to develop a state within a state on the model of the Cheka... This system was not a system which contributed to the stabilisation of the GDR, but on the contrary that many were angered by the methods which were sometimes*

*applied and remained unknown."*

Musing, towards the end of the interview, on what he might have done to avoid the collapse of socialism in the GDR, Honecker concedes: *"Of course, we should have allowed dissenters to enter into the discussions earlier."* The reforms which were undertaken were a case of *"too little, too late."*

Honecker's interview concludes on a note of optimism, which is a tribute to a communist whose loyalty and steadfastness, whatever his faults, are a shining contrast to the shuffling compromise and capitulation of the Yeltsins, Schervadnadzes, and their ilk.

*"It is beyond question that not only the material basis, but the spiritual superstructure, is decisive for the victory of socialist society. Its human force, Lenin*

*said, is the proletarian dictatorship. In comparison with bourgeois democracy, that is the purest form of democracy. Its unfolding forms are various but, precisely in view of the defeat which we have suffered, I have to say that the belief remains indestructible in me that humanity will discover new sources of power to strengthen the revolutionary forces which emphasise that Marx is not dead.*

*"One day, too, on the soil of the GDR, the sentence which Rosa Luxembour gave utterance to will have validity again. She said: 'We are with Marx again!' This is important for coming generations. Their task is to answer the questions which have lost their relevance momentarily in our day, but will nevertheless secure the future of humanity."★*

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Answer the question below and complete the entry. Detach the entry form and send it, with R10 entry fee to the SACP, PO Box 1027 Johannesburg 2000. All cheques and postal orders must be made payable to the SACP. Entries must reach us by 5 July 1993.

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PLEASE PRINT IN BLOCK LETTERS

**Question:** In which country is the world's largest wall?

**Answer:** .....

**Name:** .....

**Address:** .....

**Phone:** (Home) ..... (Work) .....

*I agree to abide by the rules of the competition.*

**Signature:** .....



# The Sunday Times caught with its pants down

In March last year, *Sunday Times* deputy editor Brian Pottinger faxed a message to *Izvestia* correspondent Boris Piliatskin in Moscow. Someone in Moscow, unknown to the SACP, but presumably sympathetic to our party, saw the fax several months later, and in turn sent a copy to our Johannesburg office.

Although we found the Pottinger fax interesting, we had no particular intention of publishing it. We did, however, indicate to Mike Robertson (another senior *Sunday Times* journalist mentioned in the Pottinger fax) that we had been sent a copy from an unknown source.

In return for this courtesy, the *Sunday Times* then published a prominent page 3 article (*SACP in Sunday Times letter riddle*, 21.2.93), in which their "furious" Moscow hireling, Piliatskin, claims that: "The SACP is full of KGB members. They act like the KGB."

Since the *Sunday Times* has chosen to go public with this, we have no alternative but to reproduce the original Pottinger fax in full (see page 68).

There are two notable features in this fax:

- Presumably after 12 months of research and, presumably, with Piliatskin now some 12 x \$1,000 (approximately R30,000) the richer, the *Sunday Times* hireling has found not one shred of titillating information on any of the names



## ■ The article...

mentioned.

All he was able to uncover were the already known, traumatic events of the early 1930s, when the CPSA became embroiled in Comintern factionalism. The tragic result of this embroilment was that three South African communists (the Richter brothers and Lazar Bach) were detained while in the Soviet Union. They were executed or died in prison during the height of the Stalin terror – all of this was published in the *Umsebenzi* second quarter, 1989, years before the *Sunday Times* "scoop", and as soon as our party had been able to learn the truth from Soviet authorities in the new period of *glasnost*.

As to anything in the last six decades, Piliatskin has come up with precisely nothing. The reason is simple. Unlike Piliatskin, for decades now, SACP members have never been hirelings of any foreign interest.

- However, there is a more sinister side to the Pottinger fax. Most of the names Piliatskin is asked to investigate are, of course, unsurprising. But two of those listed are not even SACP members –



# Sunday Times

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27 March 1992

Boris Piliatskin  
Izvestia  
MOSCOW

FAX: (092581) 230-2303

Dear Boris

It was good to hear your voice again today.

We are particularly interested in any of the Soviet archives that deal with the history of the South African Communist Party and particular where it refers to people still active in the party. Obvious names of interest to us would be Mr Joe Slovo, Albie Sachs, Jeremy Cronin, Chris Hani, Ronnie Kasrils and so on.

We would also be very interested in any reference to members of what is believed to be the still underground elements of the SACP. A prominent South African attorney, Mr Arthur Chaskalson is mentioned in this regard.

I understand many of the documents are still locked up and we would have particular interest in them.

Two Russian academics – Professor Irina Filatova and Professor Apollon Davidson are already examining the documents and we hope to persuade them to write articles from these resources as well.

We would pay you for every article you send to us and if the source material is considerable we would like to suggest retaining you at a fee of, say, \$1000 per month to work on the archives. If you do get access to the presently confidential archives we would like you to arrange copies of them to be sent to us.

As I mentioned on the telephone, I will be away for three weeks and my colleague, Mike Robertson will be dealing with this project in my absence.

Sincerest best wishes,

BRIAN POTTINGER

■ ... and the fax



Albie Sachs and Arthur Chaskalson.

The presence of Albie Sachs on the list can perhaps be explained by the ongoing love-hate enchantment this articulate and high-profile ANC NEC comrade seems to exert on *Sunday Times* editor, Ken Owen.

But what of Arthur Chaskalson?

In March 1992, when Pottinger sent his fax to Moscow, Chaskalson was playing an absolutely key role as an ANC legal and constitutional adviser in the CODESA negotiations. But his role was a background role. His skills were not visible to the public or to the press. But they certainly were visible to some of the government's negotiators.

So who wanted to discredit Chaskalson?

The *Sunday Times* is quick to publish silly allegations that the SACP "is full of KGB members". We, for our part, have been much more patient.

In the last several years, a number of senior National Intelligence Service, South African Police Security Branch and South African Defence Force Intelligence agents have defected to the ANC, or otherwise come clean on their work in the South African media. Several long

lists of journalists still working undercover for apartheid intelligence services in the commercial media have been produced. In most of these lists, the *Sunday Times* has more than its fair share of agents.

When allegations like this are made it is unfair and unwise, no matter how well placed the source, to accept them as proven. It is important to have more than one source, to have corroborating evidence. We will certainly resist the temptation to easily point fingers.

But let's face it, in requesting in March 1992 an investigation of Arthur Chaskalson, Pottinger comes close to implicating himself with some very shadedy connections. We hope there is another explanation for his behaviour.

Whatever the truth behind Pottinger's motivation, there can be no doubt that one pillar of the apartheid regime's disinformation strategy is to smear key ANC negotiators, to sow confusion and distrust between ANC supporters and the negotiations process.

Instead of pursuing mythical KGB agents in the Moscow archives, the *Sunday Times* might do a little bit of self-examination right here at home. ★

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**Our telephone numbers remain the same for now.**